Rugby League Third Test: Great Britain 20 Australia 37

Australia have the final say

Andy Wilson at Elland Road

FEW arrived here expecting Great Britain to win last Sunday. But not even the most pessimistic predicted that their challenge would last precisely 45 seconds. That was how long it took Australia's coach John Lang, via the kicking skills of his on-field general Laurie Daley, to expose the home side's most glaring weakness: Paul Atcheson's lack of pace at full-back.

Atcheson's name was still being read out over the tardy PA system when, at the end of a blistering first set of six tackles, Daley chipped into the yawning space behind the British defence. Atcheson was never going to reach it, the ball bounced conveniently into the arms of the opposing winger Ken Nagas and Australia were 6-0 ahead.

"That was the equivalent of a boxer being knocked down in the first round," admitted Great Britain's assistant coach Shaun McRae.

Atcheson was by no means the only Great Britain player culpable for the first-half avalanche of 25 Australian points. The second of two poor kicks by Bobbie Goulding conceded the position for Wendell Sailor to power through two home forwards for their second try on 16 minutes, and a poor pass from Andy Farrell led directly to the third; Ryan Girdler snapped up the loose ball on halfway and sent Sailor sprinting to the posts.

But on 28 minutes the luckless full-back was exposed again. This time his opposite number Darren Lockyer kicked deep behind him and he ran the ball back strongly. But Darren Smith led the chase and felled Atcheson with a superb low tackle while Daley went high, dislodged the ball and picked up the pieces to score. Atcheson, helped off with a groin injury and a scarred mouth, would rather have been swallowed up by the ground.

One must not be critical of McRae and Andy Goodway for selecting him. Stuart Spruce, Great Britain's first-choice full-back, was ruled out of the series by an ankle injury and Iestyn Harris's back problem and Gary Connolly's contract with the Australian Rugby League robbed them of two more likely candidates.

It was a similar story in other areas of the team: how Great Britain could have used Tony Smith's pace or the organisational skills of Shaun Edwards, in either of the half-back positions, which would have allowed Farrell to switch to his best position of loose forward. A pack including him, Denis Betts and Barrie McDermott might have provided more resistance — but Smith, Edwards, Betts and McDermott were unavailable.

However, before developing this explanation for Great Britain's 12th consecutive Ashes series defeat any further, it is worth remembering that this was not a true Ashes series because Australia were selecting only from their Super League competition. They could afford to ignore all the players from the ARL and still come up with a team which, as Lang said, "just blew Great Britain away".

The message that emerged is the same as that delivered so emphatically by the mass humiliation of last summer's World Club Championship, and before that every Ashes series since 1970.

The Australian system produces more, and better, rugby league players than its British equivalent. So far summer Super League and full-time professionalism have made little difference, because the Australians are also advancing and at a much faster rate.

"Great Britain have got to rationalise their competition," said Lang. "I've been saying that for years," responded the Super League's chief executive Maurice Lindsay, "but nobody ever listens."

It is only when the true gulf between the nations is exposed, as it was here, that the scale of Great Britain's achievement in beating Australia at Old Trafford in the second test can be recognised. Even against half of Australia's rugby league resources it was more akin to beating the All Blacks than the Wallabies in the other code.

Similarly their efforts in "winning" last Sunday's second half 18-12, admittedly helped by some erratic refereeing, could only be commended. There were two tries for Simon Haughton, who again made a considerable impact when introduced from the bench, and a beauty for Jason Robinson, who stood up two Australian front-row forwards in one glorious moment of revenge.

But it was nothing more than a token. Australia added two tries from Smith and Robbie Kearns, two of their younger players. The latter was set up by a stunning piece of handling from Andrew Ettingshausen who, like Daley and Steve Walters, was playing possibly his last game in England.



Wendell Sailor (left) punches the air after scoring Australia's second try PHOTO: OWEN HUMPHREYS

Rugby Union

Ireland run ragged by All Blacks

Ian Malin at Lansdowne Road

HANGOVERS in Dublin the day after an international are not exactly rare and, when Ireland's players pulled open the curtains on a murky wet morning in the city last Sunday, they will have wanted to reach straight for the paracetamol.

In the cold light of day the sobering truth for Ireland after their 15-63 defeat is that they played just about as well as they could against the All Blacks, whose fitful display in the first half-hour made them actually look vulnerable. But, although Ireland somehow avoided a record defeat by New Zealand – their 59-6 trouncing at Wellington six years ago was a wider margin — the afternoon once again illustrated the gulf between these nations.

Ireland's heads must now clear if that hangover is not to have a debilitating effect on a season in which they visit both Paris and London. Brian Ashton, their English coach, now in his first full season, has a long way to go if he is to enjoy the kind of cult following of Jack Charlton.

He watched the All Blacks run in seven tries and must have felt like joining the Irish fans leaving Lansdowne Road before the end of the rout.

Kevin Nowlan, one of five Irish debutants, summed up the game. The full-back said: "We competed well in the first and second phases but you can't stop them in the third, fourth and fifth phases. Eventually you run out of tacklers."

Between the 28th minute, when Ireland's captain Keith Wood scored his second try, and the final whistle the All Blacks scored 52 points without reply. Justin Marshall and Andrew Mehrtens, his fellow half-back who scored 33 points, directed operations brilliantly, but choosing an All Black Man of the Match was nigh on impossible. It is their teamwork, their supporting, passing, tackling and driving which are so impressive.

"We would have settled for 35 minutes and a half-time break of 42 minutes," said Rob Henderson, the Surrey-born centre, who is quickly learning the black humour of an Irish international.

Ashton himself was not smiling as he recognised that "for about 15 minutes we couldn't seem to lay a finger on the ball. Tactically you have to be switched on against them for the full 80 minutes because the game can slide away quickly against a side of their attacking potential."

● In last weekend's other international matches, Wales defeated Tonga 46-12 at Swansea, France went down to South Africa 32-36 in Lyon, while the game between England and Australia at Twickenham ended in a 15-15 draw.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria

Across

1 Great lady gets churched, strangely, when embraced by fool (11)
9 An inferior fellow takes port (7)
10 Little Cliff? (7)
11 City in the sway of James' rule (9)
12 Tower — sounds as if the agony could follow (5)
13 The oil producer's crime (4)
14 Solve the second lot of clues: they are . . . (10)
16 . . . concerned with a crowd the setter's been rendering unconscious (10)
19, 21 Church feature: back goes my note in the pile (4,5)
22 I can't stop watching Canis Minor endlessly shimmering (9)
24 He obtained his number commonly by conceit (7)
25 One relied upon to find corrosion in a peg (7)
26 Effect of bombardment: Carl's off into asylum (5-6)

Down

1 Cannibal sends an unusual photograph round America (15)
2 1 across's game (5)
3 Effect of twopence in benefit on Royal (7)
4 Channel Island horse roughly up-ended in pottery (7)
5 Cease being bothered about somewhere to sleep — this is an adventure (8)
6 Swinburne's address to flying relation seems 1 down (7,2,6)
7 4 preserver from block and shock (3,3)
8 Trouble and wickedness arising from beauty (6)
15 Zero hour for old railway? (8)
16, 20 Saw the sights at sporting contest and embraced (6-6)
17 Shocking amount of expense is maladministration (7)
18 I'm not at home with it in the shade (7)
20 See 16 down
23 Drop down? (5)

Last week's solution

		C					M		F					
W	I	G	W	A	M		C	A	M	A	R	G	U	E
E		E		L				R		I		L		W
R	E	N	T	A	L		O	V	E	R	N	I	C	E
E		E		I				E		N		B		R
W	O	R	D	S	F	A	I	L	M	E				
O		O				I		L		S		L		B
L	O	U	N	G	E	R		I	N	S	T	A	L	L
F		S		A		H		N				V		U
				T	H	O	U	G	H	T	L	E	S	S
A		P		H		S				A		N		T
B	R	U	N	E	T	T	E		S	L	E	D	G	E
E		S		R		E				C		E		R
D	I	S	P	E	R	S	E		Q	U	A	R	R	Y
				D		S				M				

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Winnie Mandela's day of reckoning

David Beresford in Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICA'S truth commission appeared to be administering the last rites to the political career of Winnie Mandela on Monday as a procession of witnesses testified to crimes that she allegedly committed during the 1980s in the name of liberation.

For the first time the woman who has made something of an art out of survival in the face of overwhelming scandal began to look beaten as former acolytes, friends and comrades tore at her with the gusto of hounds that have cornered a fox.

But, in a bizarre twist at the end of the day's proceedings, Mrs Mandela went to a local police station to lay charges against one of the key witnesses against her. The witness, Katiza Cebekhulu — who has been given refuge in Britain by the Labour government — flew to South Africa to testify last weekend, in the care of the former MP, Dame Emma Nicholson.

About 500 people crowded into the Johannesburg Institute of Social Science for the first day of hearings into allegations against Nelson Mandela's former wife.

Her legal team looked helpless to defend her as witnesses attacked her alibi in the murder of teenager Stompie Seipei — the 1989 killing which first shattered the myth of the "Mother of the Nation" — and began to build a picture of a woman corrupted by power.

Thami Hlatswayo, the first of about 35 witnesses due to testify, told the commission that the commander of his guerrilla unit, Vincent Sefako, was shot and killed after a feud with Mrs Mandela. He claimed that she was hostile towards Sefako after police found a gun he had left at her house after sleeping with her daughter, Zinzi.

He said a neighbour who witnessed Sefako's death and called an ambulance was later shot by a member of the "Mandela United Football Club" — a group of thugs who acted as Mrs Mandela's bodyguards — after she had told him that the woman "knew too much".

Mr Hlatswayo said he had been sent with another African National Congress guerrilla to kill the woman, Susan Maripe. They went to Maripe's house where the second guerrilla shot her with an AK-47. Mr Hlatswayo said he himself did not use the Scorpion pistol the man had given him and fled to Botswana.

But after the truth commission had been told that an inquest had established that a Scorpion pistol as well as an AK-47 had been used in the Maripe killing, Mrs Mandela's lawyer cut short his cross-examination, saying there was no point in continuing as Mr Hlatswayo had been proved a liar.

Mrs Mandela was smiling derisively at much of Mr Hlatswayo's evidence. But she became stony-faced when Maggie Dlamini took the stand.



Winnie Mandela listens to her legal representative at the first day of the hearing PHOTO: ODD ANDERSON

Ms Dlamini alleged that she had been beaten up by Mrs Mandela personally in 1988, as well as by members of the Mandela United Football Club.

She said the incident happened after she had fallen pregnant by one of Mrs Mandela's drivers, "Shakes". Shortly after she and Shakes had fallen in love, she told the commission, he "told me that Winnie had come to him in the middle of the night and got under the blanket with him". He had warned her that if Mrs Mandela found out them she could be in trouble.

> 'She did kill them . . . I want her to give my son back. I want his bones and remains'

She was three months pregnant when Mrs Mandela questioned her about the relationship. Ms Dlamini said she denied there was one, but Mrs Mandela told her not to tell lies. "She slapped me in the face and hit me with her fists all over my body and in my stomach."

Some days later she was taken to Mrs Mandela's house in Soweto and accused of lying again. This time Mrs Mandela set members of the "football club" on her. They beat her badly — hitting her with their fists and kicking her in the stomach — over a five-hour period, she alleged.

Ms Dlamini was followed by a Soweto businessman, Nicodemus Sono, and a widow, Nomsa Shabalala, who accused Mrs Mandela of being behind the disappearance of their two sons in 1988. They told the commission that the youths had vanished after two ANC guerrillas had been killed in a shoot-out with the police in Soweto.

Mr Sono recounted how he used to help ANC guerrillas, providing them with safe houses and transport. He said that after the shoot-out in which the guerrillas were killed, his son Lolo was accused of betraying them. Mrs Mandela drove to his house with members of the football club and Lolo.

The boy, who had been badly beaten, tried to speak to him, but was told by Mrs Mandela to "shut up". He had pleaded with Mrs Mandela to let him go, insisting that Lolo was a loyal supporter of the ANC. She refused, saying he was a "spy" and she was taking him away to be dealt with by "the movement".

Mr Sono said he had subsequently hoped that Lolo had been sent out of the country. When the scandal broke over the murder of Stompie Seipei, aged 14, and allegations started circulating about other killings by the football club, he suspected that Lolo was dead.

Mrs Shabalala told the commission that her son Sibonesa had disappeared at the same time as Lolo. She recounted how two young men had arrived at her house asking for her son, saying Mrs Mandela wanted to see him. They had his and Lolo's name. Her son was not in at the time.

She had subsequently received a telephone call from her son. He had got as far as telling her that he was with Lolo when the call was cut off. "She did kill them, just like Stompie," said Mrs Shabalala, gesturing towards Mrs Mandela. "I want Winnie to give my son back. I want his bones and remains."

The story of Stompie's death was the centre-piece of testimony by the last witness of the day — Mrs Mandela's former driver, John Morgan.

At her 1991 trial on charges of kidnapping and assaulting Stompie and three other youths, Mr Morgan gave evidence supporting her alibi. He told the court she was in the town of Brandfort on the day the youths were kidnapped.

Mr Morgan told the truth commission on Monday that he had lied to the court about this. He said that he had driven members of the football club to a manse on Mrs Mandela's instructions to get the youths. He had been present when they were taken to Mrs Mandela's Soweto home, where they were attacked in her presence.

He said Mrs Mandela had led the assault, delivering the first blow to Stompie. Members of the football club had then joined in.

Mr Morgan said that on the third day the teenager was "in a critical condition". A Soweto doctor, Abu-Baker Asvat — whom Mrs Mandela has been accused of subsequently having killed — was brought to the house to treat the boy. "Asvat refused and said the boy should be sent to hospital." The next day Mrs Mandela told Mr Morgan to "take the dog and go and dump it", but he had refused.

Stompie was later found in a field with his throat slit.

UK accused of harbouring Islamist killers

Julian Borger in Cairo and Ewen MacAskill

EGYPT'S president, Hosni Mubarak, this week accused Britain and other foreign states of bringing terrorism on their own people by offering shelter to Islamic militants he said were behind attacks such as last week's killing of 58 tourists in Luxor.

Mr Mubarak, struggling to salvage his country's $3.4 billion-a-year tourist trade in the wake of the massacre, tried to deflect some of the blame abroad.

"If you do not want your sons to be killed, why do you protect killers?" the president asked while in the southern resort of Aswan. "Terrorists are protected in countries such as Britain and Afghanistan . . . They live on British soil and elsewhere collecting money and planning with those in Afghanistan. They are all killers."

The Home Office, while reluctant to get involved in a tit-for-tat argument with President Mubarak, countered that the British government was taking measures aimed at restricting international terrorism.

"We are acting against terrorists, national and international. We have pledged to strengthen the law on terrorism abroad. There are a cocktail of proposals," a Home Office spokesman said. "This country is not a safe haven. We are tackling it."

The president did not offer any evidence linking the attack, in which six Britons were killed, with British-based opponents.

Egypt's blood feud, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Women's work is a serious business

IT IS difficult to imagine that an article on male employment would include the words orgasm, lingerie and lust in the opening paragraph. However, once beyond the ritual trivialisation of issues concerning women, Larry Elliot (Women's sterile choice at work, November 23) makes some valid points about the one-sided nature of flexibility in our modern flexible economy.

Mothers who express a preference for part-time work are not necessarily expressing a preference for jobs with little responsibility and low pay, that take place at strange times of the day and night, or for facing an uncertain financial future. In a recent survey of the British retail sector, many mothers, including a store manager and a twilight shelf-filler, stated that "coming to work was a rest" and "somewhere where they could be themselves". Given a choice, both would change the number and organisation of their hours.

What is required therefore is a fundamental re-evaluation of the concept of work and its social valuation, as well as a re-allocation of time between the different kinds of work between women and men.
(Dr) Diane Perrons,
London School of Economics and Political Science, London

MUCH as I appreciate Larry Elliott's intelligent commentary on the choices women appear to be making around paid work and children, he gives us only part of the picture. Why is it that this discussion takes it for granted that commitment to children is uniquely the sphere of women?

It is a fact that children tend to be higher on their mothers' list of priorities than on their fathers', but I am constantly amazed at the lack of will to challenge this situation. Let's at least name the phenomenon and search for its causes. Let's aim for more equitable sharing of the responsibility for child-rearing, and then we may find that many of the issues discussed by Elliott will fall away.

Not only will it become easier in the long term to restructure the workplace in such a way as to accommodate the family responsibilities of all workers, but mothers in the workforce will automatically have a much easier balancing act to perform. Perhaps those who hanker for the old sexual division of labour have despaired of such debate ever being joined and therefore see a retreat from paid work as the only viable means of lessening the burden that women bear.
Elizabeth Handsley,
Torrens Park, SA, Australia

WHY is that women (many professional and well-educated) who decide to "get back to the home", ie, to take their motherhood seriously, and to apply the same standards of quality to their present career as they previously applied to their renumerated careers, are automatically stereocast as 1950s' Doris Day homey housewives?

Does it ever occur to anyone in the paid working world that many women who choose to stay at home do so for their children's welfare?

How about introducing the revolutionary notion of society appreciating, taking seriously, and even renumerating, the work of the millions who contribute so much to it? But, oops, I forgot, full-time mothers don't earn any money or contribute any taxes. To Harriet Harman, Britain's Social Security Secretary, we're just a burden on society.
Roisin O'Connell-Hussey,
London

HAVING been an au pair to a caring and well-balanced family, there seems to be a world of difference between a legitimate, certified crèche, childcare centre or kindergarten for children aged three or older as the situation seems to be in France (November 9), and the case of an inexperienced, lonely and unsupervised aupair in charge of a child as young as new born (British nanny trapped in the home from hell, November 9).

The issue is not whether women should have the right to work, as they most definitely have, it is, how much responsibility are the parents of both sexes prepared to take for the children that they have in their care; whether they are newborn or the 19-year-old brought in to look after them.

In many states in the United States a 19-year-old is not considered adult enough to drink alcohol, unlike in France; why then is she considered old enough to take full-time responsibility for someone else's young child?
Katherine Murrie,
Buelach, Switzerland

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Defending the hot spots

THE excellent review of the data on global warming (The planet is facing its hottest problem yet, October 26) passed over a major contributor to the problem. Although the United States has faced no credible military threat since 1945, we have devoted trillions of dollars to alleged defences. Some of this money goes for fuel — roughly half of our oil consumption and contribution of greenhouse gasses can be attributed to the Pentagon.

The assumption that industry and developing countries must be responsible for control of emissions ignores the superstitious imbecility that the rest of the world wants to kill us. Demilitarisation would free money for our civilian economy, cause a salutary fall in the price of oil, and cut 12 per cent from global hydrocarbon emissions. It will not happen, of course. Americans are no less crazy than any other fundamentalist sect.
Art Hilgart,
Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

THE rest of the world should ban imports of US cars and oil until President Clinton is prepared to set sustainable limits to US carbon emissions. And if Britain's deputy prime minister, John Prescott, is too sychophantic to take a stand against unacceptable inaction by Washington, consumers should match Mr Clinton's proposal for voluntary limits by voluntarily refusing to make those purchases.

After all, such industries are ultimately dependent on consumers not governments. This way, the rest of the world can hold to its commitments on limiting carbon emissions, instead of "going to pieces" because the US will not match its efforts.
Jim Scott,
London

Pacific debris not radioactive

BARRY HUGILL'S feature "Poisoned legacy" (November 2) was of great interest because, like Phil Munn and Ken McGinley, I spent some time at Christmas Island (as it then was) in 1958, but as a member of the British nuclear weapons tests team. I was also associated with the Maralinga tests in South Australia over a six-year period.

I would agree that the abandoned debris constitutes some concern but, although there may be some slight toxicity from rusting metals or fuels, there would be no radioactive debris.

I returned to Kiritimati in 1959 as part of the clean-up team, although I was concerned principally with scientific equipment. The disposal system was dependent on its value assessed as either usable in the UK or greater than the cost of returning to the UK. In some cases the equipment was not deemed usable but considered to be "attractive" to people visiting the island, and was dumped into the sea off the coral reef.

At Maralinga similar items were buried to prevent pilfering, since, even though abandoned, the items were still government property and removal would constitute theft, unless some form of purchase agreement could be made. A complete inventory was made of equipment and disposal arrangements. I cannot speak for some of the building material or heavier equipment, since this was still there when I left. All radioactive material had been dealt with at the end of the 1958 tests.
Ray Acaster,
Mt Lawley, Western Australia

Hard labour in Sri Lanka

SUZANNE GOLDENBERG'S excellent exposé of the textile industry in Sri Lankan (Colombo stitch-up, November 7) bears out the stories that we receive from trade unionists.

The way in which the workers are treated is all the more regrettable since in 1995 the Sri Lankan government, the employers' organisations and the trade unions drew up a National Workers Charter, which the government adopted. The charter provided for the compulsory recognition of trade unions and the extension of collective agreements to all workers engaged in similar industries, and made anti-union discrimination an unfair labour practice.

However, so far, the charter has not been implemented. Employers are particularly hostile to any law that would force them to recognise unions within export processing zones, which are patrolled by armed guards to prevent union organisers entering.

Manufacturers are very conscious of consumer choice, and one way to put pressure on these big-name companies is for consumers to ask the retailers about the conditions under which the garments are produced. If the companies are unaware of the conditions, trade unions can provide them with the information.
Bill Jordan,
General Secretary,
International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Brussels, Belgium

Briefly

WILL HUTTON has recognised the take-home message for Britain's New Labour (November 9): "it should move to the left". But the leftward shift of the Australian Labor party has been shuffling and uncertain — hardly surprising since it was the Hawke/Keating regimes which embraced Thatcherite privatisation and abolished free tertiary education: godsends to John Howard's coalition when it took over.

In 1898, an earlier visitor (radical Irish nationalist Michael Davitt) judged Australia and New Zealand the most progressive countries in the world. If only the Australian Labor party could restore that long-lost reputation.
Noel McLachlan,
University of Melbourne, Australia

REVOLUTION is most likely to take place when a people's living standards are improving. Might not the best way to get rid of Saddam Hussein therefore be to lift non-military sanctions?
Alastair McIntosh,
Fellow of the Centre for Human Ecology, Edinburgh, Scotland

I FIND shocking Jonathan Yardley's claim that President Johnson was a "great man" (November 9). Let us not forget that Johnson was responsible for escalating the Vietnam war. Great men do not bomb villages.
Gideon Forman,
Toronto, Canada

I WAS astonished to read that you now label Mordechai Vanunu a spy (In brief, October 26). Your position was quite different when he revealed the existence of the Israeli nuclear weapons programme, was subsequently kidnapped by Israeli agents in Rome and tried in Israel. Has his incarceration for almost a decade changed him from a courageous whistleblower into a spy?
(Dr) Karima Khalil,
Cairo, Egypt

YOUR editorial on communism annoyed me (November 16). Marx's ideas went into an eclipse out here after the predictable Soviet collapse but are now making a big comeback in trade union circles and among academics. I expect a big dialectical leap everywhere soon.
Leo Kelley,
Heathcote, NSW, Australia

I NOTE there seems to be a decimal omitted from the reference to Jordan's population. "The kingdom of nearly 45 million people . . ." has about 4.1 million, according to my almanac. Israel would be a tad more nervous, I imagine, if Jordan had more than 10 times its population.
Nigel Tappin,
Dwight, Ontario, Canada

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UN inspectors return to Iraq

Ian Black and agencies

UNITED NATIONS inspectors returned to Baghdad last week to continue monitoring Iraq's weapons of mass destruction after Russia persuaded Saddam Hussein to back down in exchange for a promise from Moscow to work to end economic sanctions.

As the prospect of military confrontation receded, there was tough public talk by the United States and Britain but private relief that diplomacy had prevailed — at least for now. Yet there were signs of more disputes ahead, and no guarantee that Iraq would not trigger a similar crisis at will.

President Bill Clinton said the US was "resolute" in its determination to make Baghdad comply with UN resolutions, after Russia and Iraq said in a joint statement that the UN special commission monitoring Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (Unscom) could return.

The Unscom chief, Richard Butler, said 77 inspectors would return, including four Americans. This is two fewer Americans than expelled, but Mr Butler said the reduction was part of a normal rotation.

After three tense weeks and talks at UN headquarters in Geneva, Russia won plaudits for pulling off an astute diplomatic coup that got both sides off the hook. But Washington and London quickly insisted that Moscow's promise to "energetically promote the speedy lifting of sanctions" did not bind them.

"The United States and the United Nations have made no deal, no concession," said Bill Richardson, the US ambassador to the UN. "No carrots have been offered. We are not ready to lift sanctions until all Security Council resolutions have been complied with."

The UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said: "He [President Saddam] has not won any compromise. There are no concessions. There is no deal. There is no commitment on the part of the permanent five [Security Council members] to lift those sanctions."

British diplomats warned that Iraq had exploited the team's 10-day absence to conceal efforts to produce chemical and biological weapons.

Talks were held in New York last week on how to make Unscom's work more effective — a bland phrase which includes the possibility that personnel of other nationalities will be added to dilute the presence of the Americans Iraq accused of being spies when it triggered this crisis on October 29.

Last Sunday the US demanded unobstructed access to President Saddam's palaces and other suspect sites so that they could investigate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

The US defence secretary, William Cohen, accused Iraq of illegally blocking access to 63 sites, including the palaces, where biological and chemical weapons could be stored.

President Saddam had ruled these sites off-limits to the UN commission. But Mr Cohen said: "Those cannot be off-limits." He said that as soon as the inspectors sought access to restricted sites they were "either delayed or simply obstructed and refused. That cannot continue". The US defense secretary added that the crisis was "not over by any means".

Despite the climbdown, military moves continued. Six Stealth fighters and six B-52 bombers flew to the Gulf, to be joined by 32 more US warplanes and a Patriot missile battery, and RAF Harriers joined HMS Invincible off Gibraltar.

Talk of UN resolve could not conceal the short-term, nearly cost-free gains made by President Saddam. These include renewed international focus on the sanctions imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, a rallying of Arab support, and judicious exploitation of divisions in the Security Council which made it unlikely there would be a fight.

"Saddam's timing was very good and he's stirred up some very stagnant water," an Arab diplomat said. "He's put Iraq's concerns back on the agenda."

Comment, page 12

Apec states meet amid Asia crisis

Paul Blustein in Vancouver

AS LEADERS of the United States, Japan and other Asia-Pacific countries began gathering here last weekend for their annual economic summit, President Clinton and other leaders sought to dispel the atmosphere of gloom and panic that is gripping East Asian economies amid the recent epidemic of financial crises in the region.

"We have a few little glitches in the road here; we're working through them," Mr Clinton said at a news conference, referring to the sell-offs on Asian stock and currency markets that have forced Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea to seek massive bailouts through the International Monetary Fund.

Speaking after a meeting with the summit's host, the Canadian prime minister, Jean Chretien, the president noted that top financial authorities in the region who met in Manila last week "offered a proposal for the IMF to take a lead, for us to back them up and for the [troubled] countries themselves to take appropriate steps. I think that's the right approach".

The president's optimism was echoed by Mr Chretien, who said that Asian economies "are not facing a massive recession. It's not true at all. These countries will still be growing."

But it was far from clear that the soothing words and actions being contemplated at the annual summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum will halt the erosion in investor confidence that has dealt punishing blows to the region's once thriving economic "tigers".

Business executives from the 18 Apec-member nations who have assembled here for a meeting of their own used far more alarmist language than Mr Clinton and Mr Chretien to describe recent events in Asia — particularly South Korea's request last week for a $20 billion IMF-led rescue and reports of the collapse of Yamaichi Securities, one of Japan's biggest securities firms.

"Korea is a different ball-game from Thailand and Indonesia," said Victor Chu, chairman of the First Eastern Investment Group, a Hong Kong-based investment banking firm. "If Korea's problems are not contained, you're talking about generating an impact on Japan and the United States. Korea is the 11th-largest economy in the world; you're not talking about Mickey Mouse, and if we don't get our acts together, there's going to be a chain reaction that's going to affect everybody."

Harri Wihardo, president of a diversified Indonesian company, said the setback his country faces "makes us feel like we have to start all over again" in building the industrial prowess that transformed Indonesia into one of the developing world's proudest success stories.

Such comments underscored the contrast in mood between this week's summit and previous Apec gatherings. The leaders, who first met in Seattle in 1993, agreed a year later in Bogor, Indonesia, amid the heady days of the Asian economic miracle, "to establish free trade and investment" in the region by the first two decades of the next century.

Last weekend, Clinton administration officials maintained that by staying true to that vision in Vancouver, Apec is helping to ameliorate the financial crisis by reassuring business executives and investors that the upheaval in some Asian economies would not cause them to turn inward and abandon their commitment to open markets.
— *Washington Post*

Comment, page 12
Finance, page 19

The big weep . . . Yamaichi Securities president Shobei Nozawa breaks down over the company's liquidation PHOTO: KAZUHIRO NOGI

Saudis 'kill and torture' detainees

EXECUTION, torture, amputation, flogging and the arbitrary arrest and detention of political suspects is normal practice in Saudi Arabia, Amnesty International said this week in a new report, *writes Ian Black.*

Its criminal justice system is designed to cater for the state "with total disregard for the individual's right to a fair trial, which constitutes a basis for the enjoyment of other fundamental human rights," Amnesty said, presenting a damning catalogue of abuses. Strikingly, the report said, the Saudi authorities make no effort to conceal an "appalling" human rights record.

Saudi Arabia is treated with kid gloves internationally because of its huge oil resources, acquiescence in Western policies and readiness to buy expensive weapons systems from Britain and other countries.

Its system of justice has been given unusually intense attention for the past year because of the case of the two British nurses, Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan, accused of murdering Yvonne Gilford. The two were given access to lawyers before their trial, raising hopes for change, but the precedent has not been followed.

While the nurses' case was being scrutinised, at least 117 people whose cases were shrouded in secrecy were executed without any access to lawyers, Amnesty said. Most of them were foreign workers from developing countries.

Thousands of Saudi political and religious activists have been deprived of their freedom because the security forces are allowed to detain suspects without judicial supervision.

"This lack of judicial supervision has enabled the security forces to make torture an institutionalised practice simply because they can get away with it," Amnesty said. "Torture and deceit are frequently used to obtain a 'confession' from detainees."

● Saudi Arabia beheaded a Pakistani man on Monday for killing a compatriot by hitting him on the head with a hammer.

The Week

SECRET papers from the Kennedy era, now released, show that the United States government was so obsessed with discrediting Cuban leader Fidel Castro that it planned to blame him in the event of anything going wrong with early US space flights. Washington Post, page 17

MORE than 300 people were killed when about 1,200 Hutu rebels attacked a jail in Rwanda in an attempt to free hundreds of prisoners awaiting trial on genocide charges.

A CONGRESSIONAL inquiry in Argentina linked the police to the bombing of a Jewish centre in 1994, which killed 86 people. Congressmen said officers were paid to help the bombers, but they believed local political or ideological involvement went deeper.

NEW ZEALAND'S prime minister, Jim Bolger, signed a deal with Maoris to settle a claim first filed in 1848. The deal includes nearly $105 million in cash, an apology for broken promises and joint Maori and English names for landmarks.

THE European Union plans to spend $120 million to contain radioactive waste at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine. It said the money will be used mainly to strengthen the cover of the reactor that exploded in 1986.

PORTUGAL'S ruling Socialists have been stunned by the resignation of the deputy prime minister, Antonio Vitorino, on suspicion of tax-dodging.

THE Pakistani prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, has deferred his impeachment motion against the president, and the supreme court has suspended for a week the contempt of court against the PM in a bid to avert a political crisis.

DETECTIVES investigating the death of rock star Michael Hutchence, found hanged in his Sydney hotel room, said they were awaiting tests to determine whether the INXS singer had taken drugs or alcohol. Obituary, page 27

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Tamil Tiger row threatens India coalition

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

INDIA'S prime minister, I K Gujral, on Monday delivered a formal rebuff to the Congress party, which has been demanding the expulsion of a Tamil party from his ruling coalition. His refusal to give in to the Congress intensifies a political stand-off that has brought government to a halt and exacted a toll on the economy.

As the rupee, which started to slide after the sharp fall in other Asian currencies in recent months, plunged to an all-time low against the dollar, unruly MPs exchanged insults, leading to parliament's indefinite suspension.

Mr Gujral's United Front coalition would collapse without the backing of the Congress, which is not in the government but supports it in parliament. His letter formally rejecting a Congress demand to drop the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham had been expected for days.

A judicial inquiry last week linked the DMK to the assassination six years ago of the former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. But the basis of the accusations seems tenuous, and the report also named the leaders of other political parties, including the Congress.

Sections of the report, which stretches to more than 5,000 pages, were leaked nearly two weeks ago. They link the DMK — a member of the coalition from the southern state of Tamil Nadu — to the Sri Lankan separatist Tamil Tiger suicide bomber who carried out the fatal attack.

The leaks came as a godsend for the Congress, which has been reluctantly propping up the government since inconclusive general elections 18 months ago and has been casting around for an emotive issue that could pave its return to power.

"The Congress party does not wish to plunge the country into another election," the party's vice-president, Jitendra Prasad, said last week. But, he added: "The Congress cannot compromise where national interests are concerned."



Congress party workers burn an effigy of a Tamil Tiger in New Delhi last week PHOTOGRAPH: SUNIL MALHOTRA

The report spreads the blame for Gandhi's murder so wide as to include leaders from other parties in the Front as well as the Congress. During the 1980s, the Indian government — under Gandhi and his mother Indira — actively supported the Tigers, establishing training camps in Tamil Nadu.

However, Mr Kesri hopes to obscure that history by concentrating on the DMK's sympathy for its Tamil brethren in Sri Lanka, a tactic that has enraged the United Front.

Although leaders of the United Front government and the Congress have not publicly expressed any willingness to step back from the brink, there was the possibility of a deal being arranged secretly by regional strongmen. Mr Gujral's reply removes that prospect, hastening the collapse of his eight-month-old government and ushering in fresh elections only 18 months after the last, inconclusive polls.

"The elections are coming," Mr Gujral said on Monday.

Although Congress leaders thought they had latched on to a potent election issue in the Gandhi assassination, their initial courage seems to have vanished. Privately, party veterans are anxious for a compromise.

But their plight has met with little sympathy in the Indian press. A leader comment in Monday's Indian Express said: "And so a bemused country is witness to a foolish party first precipitating incidents and then, realising late the implications of its own actions, looking to its victims to save it from disaster."

Netanyahu defies US on settlements

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

JEWISH settlements in Palestinian areas will continue to grow, the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, promised last weekend, signalling that he is resigned to a serious rupture with President Clinton on the Middle East peace process.

On a visit to the scene of last week's murder of a Jewish seminary student in Jerusalem's Old City, Mr Netanyahu said: "We intend to continue with other things that will allow us to enforce our sovereignty over all parts of Jerusalem and to facilitate the settlement of Jews everywhere."

Gabriel Hirschberg, aged 26, was killed and another student seriously injured at the Ateret Cohanim yeshiva, a traditional Jewish school, in the heart of the Muslim quarter, when they came under automatic gunfire, the first attack of its kind in a decade. "We will bless the memory of Gabi with building in Jerusalem," Mr Netanyahu said at the dormitory of the slain student.

Ateret Cohanim vowed to avenge the killing by stepping up its settlement programme. "We found 18 places and in these 18 places we decided overnight to begin refurbishing them in order to settle in the coming year, with God's help, 18 more families," said Matti Dan, head of the Ateret Cohanim settlers group, sitting next to Mr Netanyahu at the seminary.

Mr Dan's deputy, Yossi Kaufman, said they had discussed the plan with Mr Netanyahu. "The prime minister said in a positive manner that our requests appear acceptable to him."

The prime minister's latest comments are bound to enrage Washington and seemed to have been made deliberately, against the backdrop of his deteriorating relations with Mr Clinton.

Israeli newspapers reported that Mr Clinton accused Mr Netanyahu of reneging on a promise to freeze settlement activity and that he no longer believed he was interested in advancing the peace process.

At a cabinet meeting last Sunday, Mr Netanyahu "emphasised that he had never made any commitment regarding the freezing of settlements", a statement said.

Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, called Israeli settlement a "breach of what has been agreed upon".

Meanwhile it emerged that Madeleine Albright, the United States secretary of state, warned Mr Netanyahu at their recent London meeting that if he does not make a "positive and sufficient" response on the further withdrawal from the occupied territories by early December she would publicly blame Israel for the stalemate in the peace process, thereby initiating a fundamental shift in US policy.

According to government officials quoted by Israeli media, Mr Netanyahu's proposal to implement the so-called second phase withdrawal from the West Bank on a scale of between 3 per cent and 5 per cent of the territories was rejected by Mrs Albright.

Washington expects Israel to announce a pull-back of between 10 and 15 per cent. If this commitment is made in the next few weeks, Mr Netanyahu will finally be granted a meeting with Mr Clinton next month.

Mr Netanyahu's office has suffered a series of embarrassing rebuffs in its attempts to arrange a meeting with Mr Clinton.

The latest occurred last week when, despite Mr Clinton's claim that his diary was too full, he found four hours for Shimon Peres and Leah Rabin, widow of Yitzhak Rabin, at a White House reception.

It was then that Mr Clinton was said to have angrily told Mr Peres: "Netanyahu made all sorts of promises to me and hasn't lived up to them, so how can I believe him? We understood from Netanyahu that he intended to undertake a time-out on the settlements, but this didn't happen."

Mr Netanyahu looks increasingly beleaguered, as criticism of his leadership inside his Likud party erupts publicly. His closest political adviser, Avigdor Lieberman, resigned last weekend, the first casualty of the Likud mutiny.

Power struggle grips Iran

David Hirst in Beirut

TRADERS in Tehran's bazaar stayed closed last Sunday on the fourth day of national demonstrations against critics who have questioned the authority of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. State radio and television gave wide coverage to marches held in several cities condemning dissidents as "naive" and "serving a plot" by the West.

Thousands of traders gathered at the Imam Khomeini mosque in the Tehran bazaar to support Ayatollah Khamenei, who succeeded Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on his death in 1989. Supporters of the ayatollah, a 58-year-old conservative Shi'ite Muslim clergyman who wields unchallengeable power over all the institutions of government, have directed their anger at his detractors, notably Ayatollah Ali Montazeri.

Last week, thousands of demonstrators filled the central mosque in the holy Iranian city of Qom, chanting demands for the execution of Ayatollah Montazeri and another cleric, Ahmad Azari Qumi. Others broke into the Koranic school which the Ayatollah directs, smashing furniture and shouting that this "nest of spies" must be closed.

This was the gravest episode yet in the power struggle between the two wings of the Islamic Republic, pitting Ayatollah Khamenei, and the arch-conservative clerical establishment he heads, against Ali Khatemi, the liberal president who had a convincing victory in the May elections.

In some ways, Ayatollah Montazeri, aged 75, is the true "conscience" of the Khomeini revolution. He has thrown his moral and spiritual authority behind the new president — making him a key figure in the current struggle.

The violent protest against him grew out of a rally in support of Ayatollah Khamenei. It shows how far the reactionary ruling caste will go to hold on to their threatened ascendancy. The struggle now threatens to spill over into the streets.

Human rights abuses mount in East Timor

John Aglionby in Jakarta

INDONESIAN security forces fired on university students and lashed out with blunt objects, smashing teeth and leaving many with swollen bruised faces during clashes in East Timor.

According to Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights, the security forces regularly abuse human rights to maintain order in the former Portuguese colony.

In an unprecedentedly frank report on the situation in East Timor, Marzuki Darusman, deputy chairman of the government-sponsored commission, was quoted last Sunday as saying: "The way used to handle political problems in East Timor has not improved. The security forces always use violence. It is certain that violence always results in or leads to human rights violations."

Mr Darusman was speaking in Dili, the capital, after leading a four-man team to investigate clashes on November 12 at the University of East Timor, during a commemoration of the 1991 Dili cemetery massacre, in which more than 150 unarmed civilians were killed by troops.

He dismissed earlier reports that one person had died in the incident. But he said: "University students suffered gunshot wounds, their teeth were smashed, faces swollen and bruised as a result of being hit by blunt objects. In addition to that, windows at the University of Indonesia were broken, and blackboards and notice boards were pierced with bullets."

He said the situation would only improve if the authorities allowed greater political freedoms, such as the right to gather, speak freely and demonstrate.

Sixteen people were detained after the incident and at least four taken to hospital. The East Timor police chief, Colonel Atok Rismanto, said warning shots were fired but that all procedures had been followed. "We cannot say what caused the injuries," he added.

A diplomat recently returned from the territory, which Indonesia invaded in 1975 and annexed in 1976, said: "I can't see any change in the status quo occurring in the near future. The anti-integrationists are becoming more radicalised."

● More than 100 photographs said to show the torture of Timorese women by Indonesian soldiers were released last week by Australian supporters of East Timor's resistance. The Australia-East Timor Association said up to five different women, who had been sexually abused, tortured and killed, were pictured.

In Jakarta, a foreign ministry spokesman, Ghaffar Fadyl, said such photographs could be fabricated to discredit Indonesia.

Kremlin echoes to din of cat-fights

OPINION
James Meek

IN A CARTOON in Moskovsky Komsomolets last week, a little girl shouts: "Mama! There's a dead bird in the yard!" As an angry mob gathers, an old woman shakes her fists and screams: "That damned Chubais!"

The cartoon is not just mocking the Russian tendency to blame every nasty thing on Anatoly Chubais, the government's privatisation overlord. Moscow really is full of aggressive ginger cats named after the redheaded minister. That's how notorious he has become.

But his reputation has come to far outgrow his importance to Russia. His image among Western economic liberals as a barometer of reform has distorted the world's perceptions of the country.

By demonising Mr Chubais as an evil un-Russian, the opposition has distracted attention from the root causes of the troubles and its own failure to come up with alternatives.

It is hard to defend Mr Chubais's conduct or his performance in office. His fifth share of an unreal $470,000 advance for an unpublished book on an obscure topic, put up by a company tied to one of the biggest beneficiaries of dubious privatisation deals, is the latest in a series of personal financial scandals.

So does Mr Yeltsin's trimming of Mr Chubais's whiskers — by stripping him of one of his titles, that of finance minister — count as an admission that post-Soviet reforms have been a disaster? Not in the least. Mr Chubais remains a deputy prime minister. The post he has been obliged to vacate has been filled by a liberal young reformer. Boris Nemtsov, Mr Yeltsin's heir apparent, a Chubais ally and another pro-Western privatiser, stays in the cabinet.

Viktor Chernomyrdin, the prime minister, is at the head of the cabinet. He dislikes Mr Chubais and Mr Nemtsov. But despite his reputation as an anti-reform figure, Mr Chernomyrdin, has never wavered from a fiscal policy that would have made Margaret Thatcher blanch.

Nor does the move against Mr Chubais signify an attack on government corruption. The barrage of hostile stories about him in the past year has been carried by media controlled by tycoons who feel cheated out of their share of the privatisation pie. That doesn't signify the stories aren't true: it just means that the media neglect to investigate the personal finances of other ministers, and the president, as thoroughly.

What the Chubais saga does signify is that there has been and will be no let-up in the feud between different factions within Russia's new ruling élite which has taken the place of ideology-based struggle.

If there is a gulf of ideas between Mr Chubais and Mr Nemtsov, and Mr Chernomyrdin and Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, it is a subtle one. The latter are less pro-Western, and have a conservative patriarchal view of how factories and farms should be run. The people's role has been to suffer or prosper in silence, according to their chances.

The greatest beneficiary of the feuds has been Mr Yeltsin. He has managed to stay above the squabbles; even the communists sometimes seem to forget he bears ultimate responsibility for running the country. They are as fixated on a hunt for someone to blame for sabotaging Russia as the West is on finding someone in the Kremlin to adore.

EU audit finds $5bn has gone astray

Stephen Bates in Strasbourg

THE European Commission last week promised swift action to counter misspending in the European Union after a report by the court of auditors, Europe's financial watchdog, showed that almost 10 per cent of expenditure last year could not be adequately accounted for.

Errors of more than $5 billion in payments made by the EU in 1996 were recorded in a report to MEPs, taking the total figure that has gone astray in three years to more than $15 billion.

The report paints a picture of bureaucratic confusion, fraud, mistakes in calculating grants, and failure to collect money owed to the EU.

The largest mistakes were made in payments to cereal and beef farmers, who continued to receive compensation for low prices long after the market had picked up. Cereal farmers alone received $3.3 billion too much, the biggest beneficiaries being large-scale producers such as East Anglian farmers in Britain because there was no cap on the compensation they could receive. A further $840 million went to beef and veal producers.

The subsidies to Greek and Italian tobacco farmers are also queried. They receive $1.2 billion — 80 per cent of their income — for producing their low-grade crop. The report queries whether EU funding should continue when there is no evidence it has improved crops quality.

Accountants from the Luxembourg-based court refused to estimate what proportion of money has been lost to fraud, but highlighted a range of examples.

Payments to representatives attending meetings of the EU's economic and social committee and its committee of the regions were examined and 69 per cent of claims for travel expenses during a three-month period last year were shown to be unwarranted.

The report also highlights the strange case of Israeli orange juice, where under a preferential deal the EU found itself paying subsidies equivalent to three times the amount of juice Israel was capable of producing.

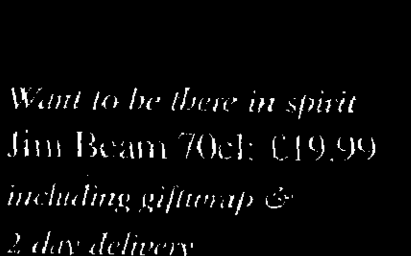
● The Commission has made an unprecedented commitment to compensate victims of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in the wake of the "mad cow" crisis. It is the first time the EU has offered compensation for illness.

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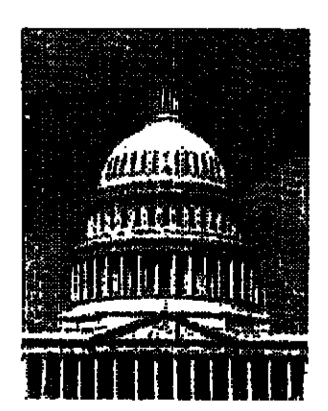
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Clinton finds little joy in foreign affair



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

THROUGHOUT the latest Iraq crisis United States policy wobbled occasionally but remained broadly consistent. Its publicly stated aim was the full compliance by Iraq with all United Nations resolutions. In Geneva, in the early hours of November 20, Iraq appeared to concede on exactly those terms. Yet there is little air of satisfaction in Washington this week at the achievement of the outcome that America sought. Why is this so?

The answer, as with so much else in the Clinton presidency, lies principally in domestic politics. Until well into the first week of the crisis, Clinton was having an autumn he would rather forget. His major policy initiative of the congressional session — a bill to arm himself with the power to make "fast track" free-trade deals — had been humiliatingly rebuffed by Congress, with his own party leading the campaign against him.

His campaign fund-raising activities were endlessly under the microscope. His much vaunted education policy was going nowhere. Congress was refusing to do almost anything that he asked without demanding anti-abortion laws in return. His party had failed to win any major elections on November 4. And in the middle distance lurked the figure of Paula Jones, his nemesis in a tight skirt.

Against such a background, a confrontation with Saddam Hussein seemed more than usually attractive. After all, there are only two things that can be guaranteed to raise an American politician's ratings, even ones that are still as high as Clinton's: an expensive television advertising campaign; and the chance to stick one on Saddam.

American public opinion, like opinion in many other parts of the globe, is utterly clear what it thinks of the Iraqi president. But it is much less clear about what should be done about him. To read the rightwing press in the US in the days after the crisis began on October 29, it seemed as though there was only one available course. An editorial in The Weekly Standard called for not only "a serious and sustained air attack on Iraq, and the sooner the better", but also "another ground attack to take Baghdad". Rupert Murdoch's New York Post complained that Saddam had "kicked sand in our face" and that it was time to "sock it to Saddam".

Indeed, the instant bellicosity was not confined to the right. The US should have "a head shot" at Saddam, said the New York Times foreign affairs commentator, Thomas Friedman. And Clinton's former aide George Stephanopoulos, now a pundit with ABC television, proposed, "We should kill him".

But as the policy makers knew, it could never be as simple as that, never mind the ethics and the legality of such moves. It took a real action man to come out of retirement and point out what was already painfully obvious to the people in the White House who were riding this bucking bronco of public opinion. Don't invade a country unless you know what you are invading to achieve and how long you intend to stay, General Norman Schwarzkopf told an interviewer. And don't assassinate someone unless you know what you will get in their place. In any case, the general pointed out, what makes you think it's so easy to find Saddam anyway?

The Clinton administration settled for what it liked to call a "twin-track" policy. Diplomatically if we can; militarily if we must. Yet it was executed in a curiously disorganised and uncertain manner. In the first half of the crisis, little effort was made to conceal the belief that the eventual resolution would be military, and the abrupt withdrawal of all the UN weapons inspectors from Baghdad on November 14 seemed to bring this possibility much closer. Yet the military build-up was always slowly purposeful rather than energetically focused. And the fact that Clinton took off for a four-day fund-raising tour at the height of the crisis and was known to have spent a day on the golf course hardly added up to a message of urgency.

This beating of drums could not disguise the reality that the best outcome the US could hope for in the circumstances was diplomatic. The crisis, after all, had begun at the UN Security Council when the French and Russians demurred at a US-backed threat of "serious consequences" if the weapons inspection team was prevented from continuing with its existing work and in its existing composition. Washington was paying the price for an inattentive appreciation of the changing Middle East context, a problem that was hugely worsened by Arab perceptions of US reluctance to exert pressure on Israel over the Middle East peace process. And that was not helped by the US Congress's continuing refusal to allow the payment of Washington's dues to the UN.

The story of the November 1997 crisis is really the story of the patching up of that fractured unity among the permanent five members of the Security Council. Once that unity was repaired — by allowing the Russians to play an important role, and by mending some shaky fences with France — the crisis ended with the very outcome which the US and Britain had said all along that they wanted: "full compliance" by Iraq with all UN resolutions and the unconditional return of the Unscom weapons inspectors to Baghdad.

And yet the administration greeted this outcome with about as much enthusiasm as a child unwrapping a pair of really useful grey wool socks on Christmas morning.

There was a moment during the crisis, on November 14, when Clinton said something that stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb from the usual "twin-track" mantra. "What he has just done", said the president, referring to the Unscom expulsions, "is to ensure that the sanctions will be there till the end of time, or as long as he lasts." Later, we were assured that Clinton had "misspoken" and that this remark was merely an error on his part. But it wasn't true. In the end, America got what it said it wanted, but it failed to get what it really wants, deep down in the national gut to which Clinton is always so attentive.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 16

The U.S. does not care about Iraq's children...

... like I do.

EU leaders quibble while the world burns

Europe this week

Martin Walker

EUROPE'S 15 political leaders were so concerned with papering over the cracks between policies at their special jobs summit last week that they might be accused of fiddling while Rome burned.

The threat of economic meltdown in the Pacific Rim is now real, after the collapse of the South Korean currency and the fall of the Japanese stock market to levels at which the Japanese banks may no longer have the capital base to sustain their bad debts. The next, frightening stage is for Japan to start selling its US Treasury bonds and other foreign holdings, which would, in turn, threaten US and European markets.

Meanwhile in the United States there was a double setback to the authority of the presidency. In failing to win congressional approval for fast-track authority of legislation, Bill Clinton has suffered a dreadful reverse in what had been so far a historical achievement, the building of a free-trading global economy in which Washington stood as linchpin and guarantor. The brakes have been applied to the building of the institutions of the new global economy, just as the tumbling dominoes from Thailand to Malaysia, Indonesia to Korea, Japan to Brazil, show just how integrated the world has become.

Nor should we look to Europe. The special jobs summit in Luxembourg proved to be extraordinarily introspective, with the usual squabbling on the sidelines between Britain and Spain over Gibraltar, Greece and the rest about Turkey, and the French against the Swedes and Danes on who should attend which meetings about the new single European currency. The only matter of substance was a lowest-common-denominator agreement that all member states should so improve their training programmes over the next five years that all young people out of work for six months, and anyone out of work for a year or more, should have access to a training scheme or some other way to help them back into the labour market.

This is sensible. Among the Niagara of findings that Eurostat, the European Union's statistical arm, produced for this conference was one striking survey that shows the virtue of training. Across Europe, young people with some vocational training are only half as likely to be out of work as ordinary school-leavers. This ratio holds good for all countries, no matter what the other national variations.

These variations can be breathtakingly wide. Europe's politicians are seeking some plausible common policy in a "union" whose unemployment rates range from 4 per cent in Austria to 20 per cent in Spain, and whose average hourly wage rates vary from under $5 per hour in Portugal to more than $34 per hour in Germany. British wage rates are in the lower-middle rank, alongside Spain and former East Germany, averaging between $12 and $20 an hour. That is the chief reason European politicians are sceptical of Tony Blair's claims that Britain can lead the way to a new European model that combines the social justice of the European system with the dynamism of the US economy.

The model that is really being adopted by the EU is the Nordic one, as developed in Denmark and Sweden, where as much money is spent in "active" measures such as training and counselling to get people back to work as on the "passive" measure of paying unemployment benefit.

Measures to help the unemployed are one thing. Reforms to make the European economy more sprightly and less regulated are another. And this was one area where Blair won substantial support for his claim that Britain was blazing a useful trail for its partners.

Earlier this year, the European Commission president, Jacques Santer, asked a group of European wise men led by Jean-Claude Paye, the former general secretary of the OECD, to prepare a report on competitiveness and employment.

Their report wholly endorsed Blair's call for flexible labour markets. They asserted that, "Contrary to popular belief, laws to protect existing jobs do not enhance job creation." And in case the French and Italian governments thought their move to a 35-hour week might win wider acceptance, the wise men concluded: "Work-sharing, to the extent that it rests on the static assumption that there is given amount of work to share, is not the best way to create sustainable employment."

There is just enough of this kind of thinking in the final summit document to raise the faint hope that this Luxembourg conference has been a watershed, and that we shall look back at it as the moment when Europe began to move away from its traditional rigid corporatism towards something more sprightly and entrepreneurial.

Whatever measures are adopted, they are likely to have far less immediate impact on the future prosperity of Europe than the financial drama being played out in Seoul and Tokyo, and the political defeats inflicted on Clinton's free trade policies in Washington. They may have seemed remote from the summiteers' deliberations, but Europe could be in for a rude awakening.

A desert haven, but for how long?

TUNISIA DIARY

Richard Norton-Taylor

THERE seem to be a large number of emancipated women in Tunisia — emancipated, that is to say, when it comes to jobs, money, and clothes. They are well-off, confident, power-dressed. Tunisians also often refer, with a combination of smugness and anxiety, to their neighbours — Algeria and Libya.

The two issues are not unrelated, certainly not in the mind of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia's president. He trumpets Tunisia's role as the first country in Africa with a women's rights movement. Women now account for a third of all doctors in the country and a similar proportion of engineers and magistrates. Women are company executives, and pilots. "Tunisian women", Ben Ali says, "are a real buttress against obscurantism."

Tunisia's mixture of economic liberalism and political authoritarianism has encouraged a relentless growth in tourism. The trains are clean and run on time. Taxi drivers, on the whole, are honest. Hotels mushrooming along the coast are managed with regimental efficiency. And since most tourists are Germans, solicitous staff address guests in well-rehearsed German rather than French, the country's colonial tongue as taught in schools.

Tunisia is rightly proud of its education programme. Crowds of university students, clothed in the latest Western fashions, pour on to the streets in the early evening. Inland, and further south towards the desert, satchel-carrying children in smart blue uniforms emerge from schools in animated discussion, text books open. Tunis has invested heavily in villages, with their own schools, built for Bedouins. How long, I wondered, will these Bedouins continue to be patronised by Tunisian guides who pass condescending comments to Western tourists as their coaches hurtle past?

Now, say the guides half-mockingly, you are only 400 kilometres from Muammar Gadafy's Libya. Now, you are only 40 kilometres from Algeria. "You are safe here" is the message as we arrive at one of the new hotels in Douz, at the edge of the desert. Douz, we are told, is the new gateway to the Sahara.

The officially-approved guides proclaim that with no end in sight to the crisis in Algeria, with political uncertainty in Niger, and with Libya beyond the pale, Tunisia is the coming new centre for desert tourism.

Driving across the Chott El Djerid salt lake to the exotic oasis of Tozeur, already equipped with an international airport, you cannot help wondering how long this peaceful wilderness will survive.

In common with other North African countries, the birth rate has soared over the past two decades, leaving a growing number of well-educated young unemployed who spend their time talking, or just dreaming, over coffee and tea.

Contemplating the once-impressive Antonine thermal baths overlooking the Gulf of Tunis in Carthage, I bump into an officious sign telling tourists to turn their cameras away towards the ruins. I look up and see a row of nervous armed police protecting the presidential palace.

There are claims by human rights groups that Tunisia is holding some 2,300 political prisoners, most accused of being supporters of the banned Muslim fundamentalist group Ennahda. How long, one must wonder, will the country remain a haven of stability?

Child sex booms in Mongolia

Louisa Waugh in Ulan Bator

IN SPRAWLING Ulan Bator, child prostitution is flourishing as Western-sponsored economic reforms and private enterprise fail to stem rising poverty. Aid workers warn that the new generation of homeless children could start an HIV epidemic and bring organised paedophile rings to Mongolia.

Foreign aid workers claim that child prostitution is increasing, and that homeless teenage gangs dominate the trade. The infection rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has spiralled in the past four years as the country has opened up to the outside world. It is now similar to that in many of its Asian neighbours.

The UN children's fund claims that up to 40 per cent of sexually active people between the ages of 16 and 39 have contracted STDs, and that two out of three infections go untreated. There are no figures for the under-16s. The city's only STD treatment centre has 160 patients a day.

High and rising STD infection rates are established precursors to an HIV epidemic.

Sex with children is cheap, and child prostitution has received little public attention or official scrutiny. Ulan Bator's police department has registered about 60 child prostitutes. Save the Children, which has been working in Mongolia since 1994, say the number is nearer 200, about a third of the city's known prostitutes.

The police launched their first formal investigation into the child-sex industry last month and arrested seven adults trading children from flats.

Prostitution and pimping are illegal, both punishable by up to two years in jail. But homeless girls as young as nine are still being sold and rented. The girls say half their clients are foreign men.

Didi Kaika, an Australian who has worked with Ulan Bator's young homeless for four years and manages a shelter for more than 40 of them, says: "Any girl who's been on the streets for more than a couple of weeks is involved in the sex industry to some extent, either through sheer economics or coercion."



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The Week In Britain James Lewis

Legacy of Diana's death proves costly for Charles

PRINCE CHARLES decided not to try to recover the £17 million divorce settlement he reached a year ago with Diana, Princess of Wales, even though it now means he will have to pay an additional £8 million in inheritance tax on her estate. The money would otherwise have had to be paid by their sons, Princes William and Harry.

After their divorce, which increased the value of her estate to around £21 million, the princess surprisingly failed to make a new will, which rendered her assets liable to tax. Lawyers for the Prince of Wales originally sought to exploit a loophole that might have enabled him to recover the £17 million and place it in trust for his sons, but thought better of it.

As part of a deal with with the Inland Revenue in 1983, when the Queen agreed to pay income tax, the royal family also undertook that its taxation arrangements would be "dealt with in a straightforward manner". Prince Charles evidently felt that to try to exploit a tax avoidance loophole, however legitimate, might be seen by the public as seeking special treatment for the royals and become another PR disaster for the Windsor family.

John Major, the former prime minister, has agreed, with the approval of Downing Street and the Queen, to act as a legal guardian to protect the young princes' inheritance. Mr Major, a former banker, is also expected to advise on the intellectual property rights which belong to the princess's estate. Such rights, covering her image, signature and name, have the potential to earn millions, but they will also be liable to tax.

HARRIET HARMAN, the Social Security Secretary, was said to have been given "a roasting" by MPs at a private meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party over the Government's decision to cut benefits for lone parents by up to £11 a week. It was the most significant backbench rebellion of the new Parliament, in which disaffected leftwingers were joined by new MPs previously thought to be docile Blairites.

The new Social Security Bill will not reverse cuts worth £390 million made in last year's Tory budget, which will include abolishing a higher single-parent rate of both income support and child benefit. Officials admit that they will cost an average of £6 a week to some of the poorest groups in society, though Ms Harman is offering a "New Deal" which, she claims, will enable more lone parents to get off welfare and back into work.

Her opponents quoted Ms Harman's promise, a year ago, to oppose the very benefit cuts she is now intent on pushing through. She admitted that she was not happy about what she was doing but said it was one of the "tough choices" which the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has repeatedly warned his followers to expect.

There was further trouble behind the scenes over plans to cut social security benefits for the nation's 6.5 million disabled. Although precise details have yet to be agreed, there was said to be strong Cabinet opposition to the plan by the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, and the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott.

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Finance, page 19

AN ATTACK on the servile attitudes of TV programme makers was launched by Tony Garnett, a producer who has given the small screen some dramatic commentaries on social issues, including Kathy Come Home and This Life.

The thrust of his complaint to the Drama Forum in London was that today's writers had succumbed to a culture of censorship and pandered to the new government. "We have a Government seething with sanctimony," he said. "Moves to extend the threshold to 10pm. Moves to stop characters doing or saying many of the things we all do or say in life. They won't rest until TV drama is sanitised in a Barbie Doll world where real human life is unrecognisable."

THE environmental group Greenpeace said it was considering withdrawing its contributions to the new exhibition on genetically modified food at London's Science Museum, claiming that the displays were biased and underplayed the risks to consumers.

Tessa Jowell, the minister responsible for public health, said that stringent regulations on the food industry demonstrated the priority given to health by the Government. But protesters denounced the Future Foods? exhibition as "propaganda" and complained about DNA manipulation, the promotion of selectively-bred cereals and vegetables, and herbicidal crop-spraying.

JIM O'DONNELL, a quintessential City high-flyer, abandoned mammon for God, at a cost to himself of nearly £1 million a year, when he quit his job as a stockbroker to become a Roman Catholic priest.

Mr O'Donnell, a former American football player, said he would leave his job as chief executive of the equities division of James Capel in London at the end of the year and would begin his priestly duties next summer in the US, where his new salary is expected to be around $10,000 plus board, lodging and, of course, the prospect of eternal life.





Golden day . . . The Queen and Prince Philip are met by clergy at Westminster Abbey PHOTO: GERRY PENNY

Queen hints at change for monarchy

Luke Harding

THE Queen marked her golden wedding anniversary last week by giving the clearest signal yet that the monarchy is prepared to accept radical change.

In a speech which hinted at future constitutional reform — but fell short of making any explicit commitments — she conceded that the royal family had to "read" public opinion if it was to survive. Hereditary monarchy, like the Government, only existed with the support and consent of the people, she said.

The Queen was speaking at the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall at a lunch held in her and the Duke of Edinburgh's honour by the Government to mark their 50th wedding anniversary. She sat at a table with Tony Blair, while Prince Philip was seated with Cherie Blair. They were joined by "ordinary" people chosen as a cross-section of the nation, at the "People's Banquet".

In her most crucial speech since the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, the Queen said the royal family would endeavour to interpret public opinion correctly. In remarks that came close to contrition, she said: "For us, a royal family . . . the message is often harder to read, obscured as it can be by deference, rhetoric or the conflicting currents of public opinion. But read it we must."

She went on: "I have done my best, with Prince Philip's constant love and help, to interpret it correctly through the years of our marriage and of my reign as your queen. And we shall, as a family together, try to do so in the future."

The speech demonstrated that the Queen is willing to countenance change and is trying to come to terms with the disastrous week which followed the death of Diana. The Queen also paid a warm tribute to her husband. In his speech at the Guildhall, the Duke praised his wife for her "abundance of tolerance". On the following day, she returned the compliment, declaring: "He is someone who doesn't take easily to compliments, but he has, quite simply, been my strength and stay all these years."

Earlier, the royal couple had attended a golden wedding anniversary of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey. The congregation belted out Praise, My Soul The King of Heaven, a hymn chosen by the Queen for her wedding service half a century ago.

Outside, on the pavement, a four-deep crowd of foreign tourists, royal acolytes draped in Union capes, and pensioners from the Home Counties shuffled patiently beneath their brollies.

Why were they here? "To stop Rupert Murdoch from becoming president," one of the crowd, Gay Fearn, replied.

Castle restored, page 23

Magazine Woman 'sex-mad and superficial'

Kamal Ahmed

WE HAVE had new man and new lad; yuppies, buppies and dinkies. Now a new species is stalking society — Magazine Woman.

A report by the Social Affairs Unit, published this week, accuses women's magazines of patronising their millions of readers with a constant diet of sex, fashion, and articles on the intricacies of getting into or out of serious relationships.

It says that publishers are out of touch with their readers, and think them "selfish, superficial and obsessed with sex". They are lazy, incompetent, live in a value-free world, and like to treat tragedies as entertainment.

Criticising publications such as Cosmopolitan, Marie Claire, Elle and Tatler, the report by the right-of-centre think tank says that instead of empowering women with a positive image of themselves, the magazines actually create an unflattering, demeaning picture.

"Magazine Woman has escaped from the kitchen only to get as far as the bedroom," said Kenneth Minogue, former professor of political science at the London School of Economics, who is one of the authors of the report. "The likely response to these magazines would be astonishment at the extent to which sex is king. My impression is of bittiness and triviality."

The report, which studied 11 of the leading women's magazines, said that they rarely dealt with serious issues, such as politics or bringing up children, and that they painted a picture of women as rude and vulgar louts.

"Magazine Woman will leave her husband or partner if she takes the slightest fancy to another man," the report says.

"Men, for her, seem to be nothing but sex objects, to be alternately hankered over, desired, scorned or ridiculed.

"In short, she is as crude, offensive and unpleasant as the most obnoxious of men."

The women's magazine market is huge and expanding. More than 3.7 million people buy the magazines that the report monitored every month, and it is likely that at least double that number read them.

Traditional titles such as Woman and Woman's Own were joined in the 1980s by a plethora of magazines aimed at younger, affluent women with careers and short-term relationships to juggle.

Magazine editors hit back, saying that the publications were very popular. "We are only talking to a specific type of woman, the 28- to 29-year-old who is single, intelligent and affluent," said Mandi Norwood, editor of Cosmopolitan.

"No, we do not talk about being married or having children, just as we wouldn't talk about being dead or gardening.

"I would like to get those academics that wrote the report and rub their noses in the piles of correspondence we get about how helpful and enjoyable the magazine is."

Hague sacks MP after poll setback

Ewen MacAskill

TORY morale sank to new depths last week after William Hague forced one of his MPs to cross to the Labour benches and saw his party humiliated in two by-elections on November 20.

Mr Hague, intent on getting all the bad news over in one day, sacked Peter Temple-Morris — a Conservative MP for 24 years and a pro-European — for disloyalty.

The move immediately reopened Tory wounds. Michael Heseltine protested at the "unwise and unnecessary" sacking, and the former party chairman Chris Patten warned Mr Hague against being tainted with "nasty nationalism". But rightwing Tories celebrated, arguing that the developments helped make for a more cohesive line on Europe.

Mr Temple-Morris, who will take his seat as the Independent One-Nation Conservative MP for Leominster, predicted the Tories "will never be electable as long as they follow Mr Hague's Eurosceptical line". He will sit on the Labour benches, but said that since he had decided against defecting to the party earlier this month, it would be unprincipled to join it now.

Tony Blair invited other disenchanted mainstream Tories to leave Mr Hague's "extreme" party and cross the Commons floor, but Mr Temple-Morris urged them to remain and fight.

The Prime Minister, in Luxembourg for a jobs summit, mocked Mr Hague for his increasingly Euroscepticism. "The Conservatives just haven't learnt anything from their defeat on May 1. And indeed they seem almost, as the Labour party was back in the early 1980s, to be drawing the opposite lessons from the ones that they should draw."

The Winchester result in particular, which saw a Liberal Democrat majority of two converted into 21,556, destroyed any hopes that a Tory revival was under way. Labour even managed to narrow the gap in Beckenham, normally a safe Tory seat, in spite of its own troubles over tobacco sponsorship of motor racing, which in the end may have prevented it taking the seat.

The byelection results and Mr Temple-Morris's sacking underline the Conservative party's internal tensions over Europe.

Mr Temple-Morris said of Mr Hague: "He is in a difficult position. He had the chance to move in the direction of voters and he is not doing that. I believe our policies on Europe and constitutional affairs are pointing us in the direction of the past rather than the future and away from the voters."

Mr Hague said: "Peter Temple-Morris said that even having a free vote on the issue of a European single currency wasn't enough for him. He was still going to entertain the idea of going on to another party. It's like running a football team where one of the players says: 'I might play for the other side at half-time.' That is not acceptable. You can't proceed like that in a political party and I'm afraid he had to go."



Peter Temple-Morris: the MP will sit on Labour benches

Winchester	
Mark Eaton (Lib Dem)	37,006
Gerry Malone (Con)	15,450
Patrick Davies (Lab)	944
Majority	21,556

Beckenham	
Jacqui Lait (Con)	13,162
Bob Hughes (Lab)	11,935
Rosemary Vetterlein (LD)	5,864
Majority	1,227

Labour to hand Ecclestone's £1m gift to cancer charity

LABOUR is to donate the £1 million it received from Bernie Ecclestone, the Formula One boss, to a cancer charity in an attempt to get itself off the hook in the tobacco sponsorship débâcle, *writes Ewen MacAskill.*

The surprise gesture is one of a number of moves over the next week intended to rebuild Labour's former reputation as both anti-sleaze and anti-smoking.

The choice of a cancer charity will help to mollify health bodies, whose representatives were due to meet Tony Blair at Downing Street on Tuesday to protest at the Government's decision to exempt Formula One from the proposed tobacco advertising ban.

When the row was raging earlier this month, Sir Patrick Neill, the public standards watchdog, put Labour on the spot by asking it to return Mr Ecclestone's £1 million.

A Labour source said that the party will first formally offer to hand the £1 million back to Mr Ecclestone. But the head of Formula One Construction has insisted he does not want it back.

Labour officials will approach Mr Ecclestone to ensure that his view remains unchanged. If so, "Labour is looking to give it to a cancer charity," the source said.

Labour, with a bank overdraft of £4.5 million, initially faced a problem in finding the £1 million. But that has now been resolved by a £1 million donation from another businessman, Robert Earl, head of the Planet Hollywood restaurants.

Although Mr Earl has been advising the Government on the Millennium Dome, he insisted at the weekend that he was not seeking favours from Mr Blair.

He said: "I have no hidden agenda, no policy I wish to influence, no favour to curry on my own behalf or to benefit my company.

"I believe this government to be dynamic, honest and absolutely committed to creating a new and better society for Britain. I am proud to be able to contribute to their efforts."

Mr Earl, aged 46, said he had been considering a donation to Labour, but his gift had been "accelerated by their current problems".

The tobacco issue will come to a head this week when the Minister for Public Health, Tessa Jowell, meets other European Union ministers to discuss the ban on tobacco advertising. She claimed last week that Formula One's exemption will be permanent, but a hint of a compromise came on Sunday when Richard Branson, head of the Virgin empire and an adviser to the Government on finding alternative sponsors, suggested it might be limited to seven years. "I think a compromise of something like seven years would be something that most people would be happy to go along with," he said.

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GW 11/97

Tuition fees 'may be hard to pay'

John Carvel

THE Government this week admitted that students may have trouble paying the £1,000 means-tested tuition fee which ministers want to impose on full-time undergraduates starting in higher education next year.

In a letter to vice-chancellors, it asked the universities to act "sensitively" when they came to levy the charge "to avoid the discouragement of students who would have difficulty in finding up to £1,000 prior to entering a course".

Legislation to introduce the fee and abolish the student maintenance grant was due to have its first reading in the Lords this week. It has been separated from the Education Bill to ensure that opposition to the university-charging policy could not jeopardise the programme to raise school standards.

The Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, won support for fees at last month's Labour conference, after promising that they would only be charged to students whose families could afford to pay. The poorest third of undergraduates would be exempt and another third would pay only part.

Douglas Trainer, president of the National Union of Students, said the letter amounted to an admission that the fees would cause problems for institutions and students. "Despite the Government's rhetoric, the fees will be a deterrent to many would-be students," he said.

It is understood that applications to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service are about 7.5 per cent down on the equivalent period last year, but there could be a late surge before next month's deadline.



Barren land . . . The M3 extension at Twyford Down in Hampshire PHOTO: STEVE MORGAN

Nature watchdog labelled a failure

John Vidal

ENGLISH Nature, the Government's conservation watchdog, is accused of turning a blind eye to deliberate destruction of some of the country's most important environmental sites in a damning report by the Worldwide Fund for Nature.

The report, compiled with the help of 50 professional conservationists working in and outside government, criticises English Nature as being secretive, defensive and unaccountable, and of failing to protect wildlife.

The most far-reaching analysis yet of the culture and practice of the six-year-old government agency argues that almost two-thirds of England's 4,000 most protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are physically deteriorating or under threat, and that English Nature is "unwilling to stand up for nature in difficult cases".

The report, which was partly compiled from interviews with EN staff, cites examples such as the Newbury bypass, the Avon Gorge, peat moors in Yorkshire, and many others where EN has done little or nothing in the face of destruction. It claims EN has even undermined local people's attempts to save nature and is encouraging industry to destroy important sites.

"It has been the voluntary sector and local people who have tried to secure the best outcome for wildlife in the face of an English Nature unable or unwilling to take the lead," says the report.

English Nature was established in 1991 after the break-up of the Nature Conservancy Council. Funded by government, it employs 700 people, including many leading ecologists. Its main roles are to protect England's SSSIs and to strengthen government conservation policy.

But the report accuses it of failing on both counts. In six years, EN has prosecuted only two people for damaging protected sites, even though there have been more than 1,000 known cases of deliberate damage.

An English Nature spokesman said: "This anonymous report is riddled with errors. It is entertaining fiction but we don't believe it needs to be taken too seriously."

The Week

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has ruled that Myra Hindley, given a life sentence for the killing of five children in the 1960s, will spend the rest of her days behind bars. The decision comes as Mr Straw tries to ease jail overcrowding by electronically tagging 6,000 offenders.

JOHN MORRIS, the attorney general, has announced that the former governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, will not be prosecuted over allegations that he gave classified documents to his biographer. The decision has angered the Foreign Office and MI6. Intelligence considerations outweighed the public interest, Mr Morris said.

TWO men robbed Cartier jewellers of gems worth up to £1 million by climbing on to a roof and smashing a skylight at the company's London workshop. Two employees disturbed in the raid were unharmed.

ALAN DEACON, the son of a helicopter winchman who died after rescuing 10 seamen from a ship off Shetland, has claimed the vessel should never have left port. Mr Deacon, whose father William drowned, said the crew of the Green Lily had been motivated by money in setting sail in extreme weather.

EIGHT police forces have taken part in a co-ordinated raid aimed at a child pornography network. Two public schools and the homes of three teachers were searched in the culmination of a three-year investigation.

THE Royal Shakespeare Company has announced debts of £1.6 million. The company blamed underfunding from the Arts Council and a decline in theatre attendance.

JAMES SMITH has been sentenced to life imprisonment for the sadistic murder of his 17-year-old girlfriend, Kelly Anne Bates. Before her death, Smith gouged out Bates's eyes, tortured her and kept her prisoner for a month at his home.

ROBBIE WILLIAMS, the former Take That singer, was ordered to pay £90,000 to his former manager, Nigel Martin-Smith, after the singer walked out on the group. Williams now faces a legal bill of more than £250,000.

THE new British Library's humanities reading room has opened in London. It replaces the old British Museum's round reading room, now closed.

THE DANDY comic has had to reverse a decision to axe cartoon character Desperate Dan after protests. D C Thomson has resurrected the cowboy after readers and newspapers complained and BBC Radio 4 held a debate on the subject.

Aitken aided by Arab cash

JONATHAN AITKEN, the disgraced former cabinet minister, launched his libel action against the Guardian and Granada with money provided by his main Saudi backer, Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, *writes David Pallister*.

The information is contained in a book, The Liar, written by Guardian journalists and due to be published by Penguin on December 4.

It comes out five months after Scotland Yard started an inquiry into perjury allegations against Mr Aitken, who withdrew from his libel case after documents showed that he had lied to the court.

The inquiry, led by Detective Chief Inspector Geoff Hunt of the Organised Crime Group, has not yet produced a report for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

A spokeswoman for the Crown Prosecution Service said it was not expecting the investigation to be completed for several months.

Guardian inquiries after the libel case collapsed in June have revealed that up to $200,000 was handed over by the prince after he had seen a video recording of Granada's World in Action programme, Jonathan Of Arabia.

Charity 'sent equipment to the Croatian militia'

Madeleine Bunting

THE Charity Commission has frozen the bank accounts of a charity which raised millions of pounds for victims of the Bosnian war after allegations that one of its trustees, Bernard Ellis, arranged to deliver military equipment to the Croatian militia.

Mr Ellis arranged for the Medjugorje Appeal to send more than 200 vehicles — including former Ministry of Defence troop carriers — and large quantities of military uniforms, along with camouflage nets and handcuffs, to Medjugorje, a Catholic Croat area of Bosnia, and the site of the world-famous shrine to the Virgin Mary, at the height of the ethnic cleansing.

Mr Ellis, the executive trustee of the Appeal, has been temporarily suspended because of "serious errors of judgment", the Charity Commission said last week.

Dragan Kosina, the brigade commander in charge of supplies for the Croatian militia, the HVO, in Medjugorje, made specific requests to Mr Ellis for equipment, according to a Channel 4 Dispatches documentary.

Mr Ellis admits that he arranged for the Appeal to send out 10 troop carriers as well as handcuffs and camouflage nets, and defends this as responding as "a friend to a friend".

He admitted that the handcuffs were handed over to the local military, but were for coping with people who were "stealing food", and he claimed that the camouflage nets were intended for humanitarian, not military use.

The Appeal sent out more than 200 vehicles, ex-ambulances, Jeeps, lorries and private cars.

Former Appeal workers in Bosnia were horrified to see these vehicles in the hands of the HVO.

One Appeal worker, Katie Griffiths, was so concerned that she wrote a letter to Mr Ellis in August 1993, which said: "I was told . . . that the two most recent convoys of vehicles are to be handed over to the HVO. I feel strongly that the Medjugorje Appeal absolutely must not participate in, or abet, a political or military agenda. It is playing with fire."

She also criticised Mr Ellis as "attempting to wear two hats — one as a charity with humanitarian aims, one as a friend of the Croats in that region."

Given that the area of Medjugorje was the object of the Catholic Croatian forces' ethnic cleansing of Muslims, the allegations are particularly damaging to the Appeal.

Ex-spy admits secrets deal

RICHARD Tomlinson, the first MI6 agent to be prosecuted for secrets offences since the Soviet spy George Blake 36 years ago, said on Monday he had no alternative to pleading guilty even though the information he disclosed was "trivial", *Richard Norton-Taylor reports*.

He said he had wanted to plead not guilty but the draconian nature of the Official Secrets Act made it impossible — there was no public interest defence. "I would have been guilty even if I had disclosed the colour of the carpets in the office," he said.

Mr Tomlinson, who was committed for sentencing to the Old Bailey, is likely to serve significantly less than the maximum two-year prison term.

Colin Gibbs, prosecuting counsel, told the court in central London that Mr Tomlinson had prepared a seven-page synopsis of a proposed book for the Australian branch of Transworld Publishers in Sydney.

The synopsis was obtained by Special Branch officers. They passed it to MI6, who said it contained information about training, operations, sources and methods.

However, Owen Davies, counsel for Mr Tomlinson, said the synopsis posed "no substantial or realistic danger to national security".

Care system fails to protect young

David Brindle

MINISTERS plan sweeping measures to offer better protection for children living away from home, after an official report warned that abusers could exploit gaping holes in existing systems.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, said the report presented "a woeful tale of failure at all levels to provide a secure and decent childhood for some of the most vulnerable children".

Promising a full programme of policy and management changes, the minister told the Commons: "These vulnerable children living away from home are the responsibility of us all. Many have been let down. We will make sure that in future they are looked after better."

The report was produced by a review team led by Sir William Utting, a former chief inspector of social services, who was asked by the last government to check on existing safeguards for an estimated 200,000 children who spend at least 28 days away from their family home in local authority care, at boarding school or in some other institution.

The review was ordered in response to allegations of widespread physical and sexual abuse in children's homes during the 1970s and 1980s. Allegations in north Wales are separately the subject of a public inquiry.

Sir William's team has confirmed that young people who complained of abuse were not believed and were often sent back to the same homes.

The team's central recommendation is that the children's home sector must be rehabilitated as an approved means of accommodating young people in care, with the Government taking a clear lead in the process.

Mr Dobson fell short of accepting this outright, but announced he would lead a cross-Whitehall ministerial task force — including outside advisers — to draw up a response to the team's report. Although he made no mention of funding, ministers have indicated previously that extra cash will be made available.

The Utting review, which was paralleled in Scotland with publication of a corresponding report by Roger Kent, a former social work director, was welcomed by child welfare charities and social care groups.

Mike Taylor, director of children's services at the NSPCC, said: "Despite the high profile given to cases of abuse in residential care, the Utting report highlights that all children living away from home are vulnerable to abuse."

Main recommendations

- Government must take central initiative to drive changes in children's homes.
- Homes with fewer than four places must be regulated as a matter of urgency
- Homes should be expanded to ensure full choice of services
- Recruitment and support of foster carers should be reviewed
- Private foster carers should be registered
- Health Secretary should take powers of inquiry into boarding schools

Network of child prisons to be set up

Alan Travis

A NATIONAL network of separate jails to hold offenders under 18 is to be set up by the Home Office after a stinging report by the Chief Inspector of Prisons about the way teenage prisoners are treated.

Sir David Ramsbotham says he is so alarmed by the conditions endured by the 2,600 teenagers in Britain's jails that he believes the Prison Service is no longer fit to be in charge of them.

"I do not believe that children under 18 should be held in prison," said Sir David last week. "The Prison Service is essentially an organisation for adults and is not equipped to deal with children."

The Prison Service responded by outlining plans for up to eight separate juvenile jails which would hold those aged up to 18. At present, teenage offenders are mixed in with the 11,000 inmates aged 21 and under in Young Offender Institutions and adult prisons.

The Chief Inspector's report on young offenders, published last week, says the conditions faced by most teenage inmates damages them and increases the chances of their reoffending. In many cases rising numbers and cost-cutting means they faced being locked up for too long, sharing cells that were too small, with too few staff to ensure their time was properly occupied, says the report.

The Chief Inspector cites cases where the education was so poor it amounted to teenagers being left to fill in outlines in young children's colouring books. "It is the plight of children that alarms us most, not least because of the conditions in which they are held . . . They are, in many cases, far below the minimum conditions in Social Services Department secure units required by the Children Act 1989 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child."

The Director-General of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, acknowledged that the Chief Inspector's report raised genuine concerns and disclosed that he was already drawing up plans to hold under-18s separately. Mr Tilt said he hoped £17 million would be made available to enable the service to spend an extra £7,000 a year per teenager on improving education and regimes.

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'he pendulum ;wings in Asia

ILL CLINTON and his regional summiteers in Vancouver have assembled to contemplate a ry different sort of miracle from the one they are customed to discussing. The Japanese prime minter, Ryutaro Hashimoto, will join him with a nerous eye towards Monday's decision in Tokyo on the amaichi Securities shut-down. President Kim oung-sam has told the Korean people that they ust expect "bone-carving pain" as his country rambles for help from the International Monetary und. Out goes the success story of a "booming sia", which moved from slums to skyscrapers in a eneration and offered a enviable model to the Vestern world. In comes a counter-miracle of lunging markets and shaky finances propped up by orrupt and dubious political structures which, as e US state department said last weekend, could ve everyone a nasty bout of Asian flu. This new ave of alarm may prove as unbalanced as the tide f euphoria that has ebbed so fast. But it reopens all orts of questions, starting in Asia, which had been helved in the age of miracles.

It was Mr Clinton who elevated the Asia Pacific conomic Co-operation (Apec) Forum in 1993 to regional summit, as he shifted Washington's ision further towards the Far East. In doing so he as reinforcing what had already become a main trand of US diplomacy. In spite of the occasional ackward glance towards Europe, the Pacific asin was really the only vision on the horizon. As e tigers grew sleek and were joined by superger China, the region seemed set to dominate the ew century: the task for the West was how to dapt this to its best advantage. There was an important political corollary as the cold war came to n end. What was happening in Asia was seen to nderline the end of ideology and strategic contention that had held back global development for more than four decades. Geo-economics would in uture prevail more than geo-politics, just as long s the market economies continued to grow.

In this revivalist atmosphere, there was a superstitious unwillingness to contemplate the other ide of the picture. The earlier bursting of Japan's ubble economy should already have sent a signal. The political weakness and corruption of countries uch as Thailand and Indonesia were discounted s they too joined the miraculous change. Even oday, though the World Bank has now begun to ocus attention on China's basic weaknesses — including lack of political reform and approaching environmental disaster — there has been great reluctance to explore the adverse effects upon China of a wider economic collapse in the region.

Almost overnight the question is now being asked whether the miracle will turn into a nightmare, although more modest suggestions that the system was flawed were often brushed aside as naive only a short while ago. The problem is how to form a more balanced judgment in analysing world trends, rather than continue this pendulum swing of verdicts. It was always implausible that economic growth based on such shaky financial foundations would not come unstuck, and too optimistic to suppose that it would tame geopolitical rivalries in Asia where four great powers rub shoulders. The message from Vancouver is a vow to continue with trade liberalisation in spite of Asia's financial turmoil. Otherwise this would give "the wrong signal". Yet the real signal needed is some sign that Apec is capable of taking a critical look at itself, and acknowledging that this is a kingdom where too many monarchs are unclothed.

Edging forward over Iraq

THE DEAL that was no deal has resolved, at least for now, the crisis in Iraq. It was in everyone's interests that such a settlement should take this peaceful route. Short of military action for which in the end the United States itself had no taste, this was always going to depend on creative diplomacy. Now the task is to ensure that it does not become just a verbal fudge.

So does some understanding exist in spite of the insistence by the UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, that Iraq "has not won any compromise"? Saddam Hussein can point to the Russian commitment to "energetically promote the speedy lifting of sanctions . . . with no additional conditions". That, as Mr Cook observes, has been Moscow's position all along, yet it must acquire rather greater weight in a new negotiated context. Yevgeny Primakov seems to have played a lone hand, yet his initiative was approved by the foreign ministers in Geneva, and the French as well as the Russians clearly think that the US signalled some flexibility to help it along. It is absolutely right to insist that Iraq should fulfil all the UN resolutions on carrying out its disarmament programme. But there is no legal basis for the US's additional demand that sanctions stay as long as President Saddam remains in power. The last few years have shown very clearly that the Iraqi leader is not going to be removed either by overt pressure or covert means. Whatever the arguments for or against military action, no one has ever claimed that it could reliably deliver such a result. And the illusion about the solidarity of the West's Middle East "allies" has also now been dispelled — if it had not been shattered long ago. The last thing that despotic regimes such as Saudi Arabia wish to contemplate is the overthrow of the region's greatest despot. Perhaps the mood might be different if the Palestinian peace process had not run so disastrously into the buffers, while the US stood idly by.

It would be reasonable now to look at ways of expanding the "oil for food" programme which is due for review this week. The UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, has been considering this for some time, and some confused leaking from Washington has suggested that the US too might allow some increase if Iraq complied on the inspectors issue. How to avoid punishing the Iraqi people while continuing to maintain sanctions against President Saddam is a practical question as well as one of principle.

How does this square with the doomsday view of Saddam as bent on acquiring a chemical and biological capacity — with which he will then avenge himself on the world? If this were the case, it is not clear why he should have now compromised since he has not been previously deterred by the threat of force. The truth as always must be more blurred: whatever he may dream of, we are better placed to monitor and deter with the inspectors inside than outside. That is a step forward, and a cautious plus for diplomacy.

Benefits in the balance

FORGET, for the moment, the Labour Bill withdrawing two special benefits to one-parent families. Forget Labour's secret proposals to cut social security benefits for Britain's 6.5 million disabled people. And ignore next April's change that will limit payment of council tax benefit to poor people in larger houses. There is a meaner Labour measure passing through Parliament. First drafted by the Conservatives, Labour is proceeding to enact a rule that will mean the maximum backdating social security offices will allow for any benefit is one month. Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, has spoken of an urgent need to identify the 600,000 elderly people who are eligible for income support but due to confusion, ignorance or pride, don't claim it. The sums forgone are an average of £700 ($1,200) in a year. But now she is insisting that these confused widows, and others equally poor, will only be eligible for a mere four weeks of benefit, not the 52 weeks previously paid. This is pure robbery. If only the social security system were better at relaying information on entitlement, there would be far smaller numbers of unclaimed benefits.

A Labour government, which claims to want to end social exclusion and reduce inequality, has been examining a long list of options that would reduce a clutch of disability benefits. Ministers who have been talking publicly about enhancing disabled people's civil rights, have privately been examining ways of withdrawing their social rights. A Government refusing to raise top income earners' taxes, is planning to tax those on the lowest income.

Labour's move to reduce welfare dependency is right. Its welfare-to-work programme is right. But ministers are being perverse in their refusal to recognise there are large numbers of poor people — elderly, permanently disabled, or severely mental ill — who cannot go back to work. Better benefits are the only way in which they are going to share in the nation's rising standards of living. Labour backbenchers are right to be in revolt. Let them remind the Prime Minister of a pre-election test he set for himself: "If the next Labour government has not raised living standards of the poorest by the end of its time in office, it will have failed."

Luxor swells hatred of terrorists and tyrants

David Hirst

THE VERY stability of the Middle East is the root of the carnage at Luxor in Egypt, in which 62 people died. This proposition may sound paradoxical, because the oil-rich region is held to be the most turbulent on earth. Events such as Luxor only reinforce that view.

But in one startling and ultimately disastrous way it really is the most stable. For it boasts the longest-serving rulers in the world — proof against any reckoning, any retribution, for the mistakes and miscalculations or the monstrous crimes and follies they have visited on their peoples. The longevity of dictators, such as Iraq's Saddam Hussein and dynasties such as the Sauds in Saudi Arabia, is an offence to modern notions of justice, decency, democracy and human rights.

Yet, after Luxor, Western leaders found themselves in the unfamiliar company of almost all these regimes as they went through their customary expressions of outrage and sorrow at the latest Middle Eastern atrocity. The Islamic republic of Iran, generally regarded as the fountainhead of Islamist terror, called it "vile and inhuman". The Palestinian Hamas, best known for its suicide-bombings in Israel, said it "condemned this attack on civilians".

There is no question that the terrorists are growing deeply unpopular. They always were unpopular among the Arab ruling élites, the intelligentsia and large segments of the middle classes, who tend to be liberal, secular and nationalist. But they are also increasingly unpopular among the masses who have been political Islam's natural constituency.

In Algeria, where the terror is the most extreme and widespread, it has become a matter of survival; there the Groupes Islamiques Armées (GIA) have taken their campaign from selective assaults on the soldiers, policemen and secular intellectuals who serve the regime, into random car bombings and most recently, it is alleged, into the slaughter of whole communities. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that the regime itself is manipulating so-called "armed groups" for its own sinister purposes.

In Egypt, in addition to the repugnance that most people feel at these atrocities, they resent the economic consequences of terror, particularly the effect on the tourist industry.

The militants themselves, out of expediency perhaps as much as conviction, have been turning against violence. Some of the "historic chiefs" of Jihad and Gama'a al-Islamiya (the Islamic Group) called on their followers to cease fire in July; they were weary of the fight which, after government successes, they knew they could never win.

So why, in this hostile environment, did Luxor happen? The answer lies partly in the dynamics of terror and counter-terror in which the militants and the state are engaged. This has acquired its own momentum. It is less and less ideological and political; more and more a blood feud. The regime, with its massive violations of human rights, does not care much about its standing in society; nor do terrorists who have resolved to defy even their own leaders.

In such circumstances, terror is bound to gravitate towards its most extreme expression. That process is far more advanced in Algeria, where all manner of clan and community conflicts have now grafted themselves on to the main struggle. But Egypt is beginning to catch up.

The killers of Luxor first shot their victims and then, in Algerian style, went at them with knives. They knew that they could strike no easier yet more devastating blow against their real enemy, the state.

It was the regime-terrorist blood feud that produced Luxor, but it is what produced the blood feud that ultimately counts for more. And that has much less to do with Islam than it does with those social, economic and political woes that furnished the Islamists with the impact they would not otherwise have had.

It is in protest against these conditions that Islamism first arose. The Islamists seized the moral high ground against decadent regimes mouthing principles they never practised. And despite the horrors perpetrated in Islam's name, they still occupy much of that ground. They do so because the regimes — in their undeserved durability — have done nothing by way of reforms to rob them of their allure. On the contrary, in countries such as Egypt and Algeria conditions worsen.

Take, for example, the "new rich" who flourish in the shadow of those regimes. Their behaviour is more provocative to the mass of the people than any foreign tourists. "Their corruption," said a leading Egyptian economist, Ismail Sabri Abdullah, "delegitimises even honestly acquired wealth."

LACK of hope is perhaps even more serious than material misery. Only open political systems can furnish hope. "What we desperately need," said a former Algerian prime minister, Ahmad Hamroush, "is far more democracy, not the less of it the regime is giving us."

So it is that, in the two countries where the Islamist opposition has lately posed the most serious threat, the regimes have managed to reconsolidate the existing order. They have done it behind a façade of democracy. Very little has been heard for a long time about the once formidable Islamist movements of Iraq and Syria, ever since the rival Ba'athist regimes, employing no such niceties, crushed them.

It sometimes seems that the US only raises questions about Egypt's human rights record when it is unhappy about President Hosni Mubarak's failure to acquiesce in America's larger strategic purposes in the region. Israel is the chief of its concerns. But, for the Arabs, this overwhelming solicitude for the welfare of Israel is the most unnatural element in the whole unnatural order.

It is unfortunately all too true that many of those who, like Hamas itself, deplored the massacre at Luxor would accept or even rejoice at another Hamas suicide exploit in Jerusalem. True, too, that if, the Islamic Group had massacred Israelis, or even Americans, there would have been no such condemnations from such unfamiliar quarters. And it is a sad reflection on the current temper of the Arab world that the ordinary man would not have shed too many tears over it either.



French lessons . . . Chirac at the Francophone summit in Hanoi

PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICK DE NOIRMONT

Chirac's flawed Francophone democracy

EDITORIAL

ONE of President Jacques Chirac's foreign policy ploys is to do a lot of backslapping when he meets leaders of other countries. That technique did not work too well at the seventh Francophone summit, which ended in the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, on November 16. Chirac discovered, to his dismay, that trying to be friends with everyone is sometimes not so easy.

It was out of friendship, no doubt, rather than as the result of a careful policy decision, that Chirac promised Boutros Boutros-Ghali the job of secretary-general of Francophonia — the organisation of French-speaking countries — when the Egyptian diplomat was prevented by the United States from securing a second term as secretary-general of the United Nations.

That was a mistake, because Boutros-Ghali was not the ideal person to put across the image of a rejuvenated, forward-looking and cleaned-up Francophonia that was no longer obsessively anti-American.

To many, Boutros-Ghali embodies an élitist form of Francophonia. And while he is undoubtedly a well-known figure on the international scene, he is viewed in some quarters as the man who suffered defeat at the hands of the US after having been, in the eyes of many others, Washington's henchman, particularly as regards the conflict in Somalia.

But, as became evident at the Hanoi summit, the choice of Boutros-Ghali was above all a mistake because it helped to focus the concerns felt by French-speaking Africans about their relationship with France.

Chirac had given his word to Boutros-Ghali and thought he could solve the problem that the choice posed for his African friends. He managed to get Boutros-Ghali appointed; but, for the first time, African countries showed their displeasure and made it clear that they wanted to be treated with greater consideration in future.

African disgruntlement, as expressed at the Hanoi summit, is ambiguous. It probably stems in large part from a crisis of confidence and a fear of being abandoned by France, which is being difficult about issuing entry visas, as well as now toying with the idea of redirecting its handouts towards other continents.

The rumblings of discontent from African countries had the effect of revealing what kind of "democracy" was responsible for Boutros-Ghali's appointment. Chirac is someone who argues that the best way of promoting democracy and human rights is to set a good example, and that persuasion is always better than sanctions. Boutros-Ghali's "imposed" election has provided an unfortunate illustration of how things are done in Francophonia. It also undermines the credibility of its new secretary-general.

(November 18)

El Mundo claims porn video a 'political plot'

From a correspondent in Madrid

A PORNOGRAPHIC video-cassette has caused a political storm in Spain. For the past few weeks the cassette, which shows Pedro J Ramirez, editor of the Madrid daily El Mundo, in sado-masochistic pose and dress, has been doing the rounds of Spanish newsrooms.

El Mundo was the newspaper that revealed most of the scandals in which people close to the former Socialist prime minister, Felipe Gonzalez, were implicated, including links to death squads targeting ETA Basque separatists. The paper now accuses former Socialist leaders of being behind what it describes as a "machination" and a "political plot".

In its November 16 issue El Mundo accused the former secretary of state for security, Rafael Vera, close collaborators of Gonzalez and former senior officials in the interior ministry.

The accusations have turned a scandal that many Spanish found rather droll into a political row. El Mundo has based its accusations on statements reportedly given to the police by the other protagonist in the video, Exuperancia Rapu, a woman from Equatorial Guinea.

She is believed to have been acting "on orders" to trap the man Spain calls "JR", after, she claims, receiving $350,000 from Vera. El Mundo accuses Vera, who has been implicated in the death-squad scandal, of trying to "neutralise the paper".

According to Ramon Jauregui, a member of the Socialist party's executive committee, El Mundo's accusations are "pure fabrication". "In the past few years," he said, "news stories and media pressure have been used as a method of blackmail. Many people have been the target of scandals, insults, slander and libel. The result has been an intolerable political and media climate that the Socialist party has long criticised."

Meanwhile the government's spokesman and junior communications minister, Miguel Angel Rodriguez, said: "The government has chosen to make no comment."

But the debate over the protection of individuals' privacy does not seem greatly to interest the Spanish. They are much keener to know who put the video camera in the cupboard and filmed Don Pedro getting up to hanky-panky.

(November 21)

Shining Path rebels return to haunt Peru

Nicole Bonnet in Satipo

THE Peruvian government thought it had dealt a mortal blow to the Shining Path movement when it arrested its founder, Abimael Guzman, in 1992. It was wrong: the Maoist party has sprung to life again in the depths of the virgin forest in San Martin de Pangoa district, 350km east of the capital, Lima.

One of its latest surprise attacks forced the French firm Compagnie Générale de Geophysique (CGG) to abandon the seismic survey it had spent a year carrying out for the oil company Elf-Aquitaine. The CGG made its 850 employees redundant at the end of the summer and has now virtually abandoned its encampment near the Satipo river.

Felix, the driver of the motorbike-taxi that brings in the site's few visitors, is deeply concerned. "The company's departure was a disaster for the inhabitants of Satipo," he says. "It's a sign that the terrorists are beginning to lay down the law again."

In August, a column of Shining Path guerrillas kidnapped 30 of the CGG's staff near Devil's Canyon, on the Ene river. They threatened to execute their hostages unless they were given food, clothes, shoes, medicine, batteries and radio equipment. "This has been our domain for years," their spokesman explained. "You installed yourselves here without our authorisation." But two days later, the hostages were freed unharmed.

"The crisis ended happily thanks to the direct participation of the regional army commander, General Huertas, in the negotiations," says CGG representative, Bernard Sore.

San Martin de Pangoa district, the largest in Satipo province, has not fallen completely under the control of the rebels. Except for the northern part, around the district capital, it consists of nothing but tracts of virtually virgin forest.

Shining Path set up its headquarters near the Anapati river. From there, it has launched attacks as far away as the Mantaro river in the south and the Ene river in the east. "The forest is an impregnable hide-out," says the mayor of Satipo, Raul Quispe.

Pepe Campos, the head of an indigenous organisation in the region, confirms that Shining Path has been established there since 1987: "Old people, women and children grow cassava, bananas, haricot beans and pumpkins. The men make up a mobile base for Feliciano." Feliciano, whose real name is Oscar Ramirez Duran, is the rebel leader who opposed the peace agreement signed by Guzman in jail.

The rebels have set up their camps overlooking the valleys. They have changed their strategy and now admit their mistakes. "Our people's war went too far, and there was pointless violence. That was a bad thing," they tell settlers who grow coffee in the area. "Our main enemy is the state. Collaborate with us in silence, and everything will be OK."

Shining Path has re-adopted its initial strategy, which is to win over and surreptitiously enrol the local population. "But sooner or later they'll take a harder line, just as they did from 1983 on," warns the Ashaninka Indian leader, Santiago Contoricon, deputy mayor of Tambo river district, near the Ene.

He knows what he is talking about: the Besada brothers, who head the rebel movement in Pangoa, are his cousins. Like him they are primary school teachers. "They are trying to re-establish themselves in our community so they can take control of it again," Contoricon says. "Our people are on patrol night and day, but we are not allowed to pursue them. As long as that is official policy, they're bound to get the upper hand."

The heads of the settlers' self-defence groups, the *ronderos*, are unhappy too. The army refuses to lend them a hand, convinced that Feliciano is just a crank who leads a ramshackle force of 20 guerrillas.

The police, who deny that "subversives" have made any real inroads, simply paint over the graffiti on the walls of San Martin de Pangoa that call for a "people's war". The Ashaninka and the ronderos remain sceptical. They feel the military is not prepared for this kind of war.

On top of that, Shining Path has local allies: the drug traffickers. Little coca is grown in the district, apart from the south near the Mantaro river and Apurimac valley. But there are many "labs" where coca is chemically treated before being exported to Brazil or Colombia by traffickers who use the rivers, or secret trails through the jungle.

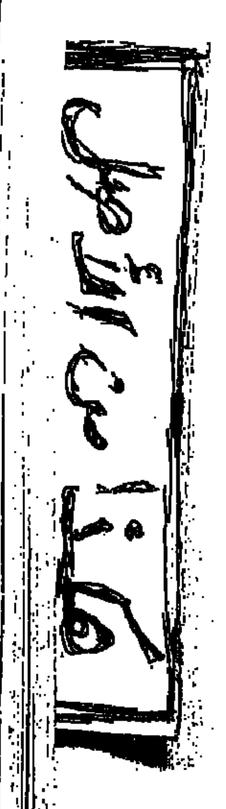
A community of Ashaninka Indians in Cutivireni recently captured some traffickers and handed them over to troops at the Morales base on the other bank of the Ene. Strangely, the traffickers were released, while Jaime Velasquez, the mayor of Cutivireni, was charged with drug trafficking.

"If we denounce the authorities who are in cahoots with the cocaine traffickers, we're accused of being terrorists or agitators," say the Ashaninka. So they prefer to keep silent.

Last year the government implemented a policy of settling former members of Shining Path militias along the Ene. It has proved to be a failure. "The so-called repentant Shining Path guerrillas changed their spots," Campos explains. "They swelled the ranks of the guerrillas who hadn't budged, while at the same time receiving food and work equipment from the state. They were even given rifles."

Humberto Orozco, president of the Satipo self-defence organisation, to which some 40,000 ronderos belong, is equally pessimistic: "Last year I told people in high places about the way Shining Path was making a comeback. Nobody believed me. The troops in the seven military bases here never set foot outside their barracks. Why should they, since President Fujimori has told us that Shining Path has been annihilated? Burying one's head in the sand like this could prove suicidal."

(November 30)



Roll-call of death that convulsed the left

Ariane Chemin charts the troubled history of Le Livre Noir du Communisme

EVERYTHING had been carefully planned by publishers Robert Laffont. The publication date of Le Livre Noir du Communisme was chosen three years in advance to coincide with the anniversary of the Russian insurrection that led to the founding of the Soviet Republic on November 7, 1917 — or October 1917 in the Western calendar.

The book, a collective effort by several historians, was intended to have considerable impact. It would be a "bible", according to the publisher Bernard Fixot and the book's editor, the historian Stéphane Courtois. For the first time, in a book of more than 800 pages, specialists would attempt to assess the number of communism's victims throughout the world. The figure arrived at was "almost 100 million dead".

Everything had been planned except the key contribution, the preface, which was needed to put the book in perspective and prevent it from merely becoming an impersonal roll-call of victims.

In September, a number of the book's contributors began to have misgivings about its preface, written by Courtois, and about its title and back cover. They included Nicolas Werth, who wrote the largest chunk of the book (on terror and repression in the Soviet Union), Karel Bartosek, who dealt with central and eastern Europe, and Jean-Louis Mingalon, an expert on communism in Asia, and more particularly on the genocide carried out by Pol Pot in Cambodia.

There followed a flurry of letters, threats of legal action and notices served by the publisher on Margolin demanding that he hand in his copy. Despite last-ditch attempts at mediation, the publication of the book with a preface by Courtois has caused a terminal rift in the team of historians of communism who only a few months earlier had been working together harmoniously.

Margolin and Werth criticise Courtois for regarding "the criminal dimension as one of the dimensions peculiar to the whole communist system", as he wrote in his preface. "That is tantamount to robbing the phenomenon of its historical character," Margolin argues. "Even if the seedbed of communism can result in mass murder, the link between doctrine and practice is not obvious, contrary to what Courtois says."

The two historians criticise Courtois's "contradictions", "revealing blunders" and "obsession with notching up a figure of 100 million dead". Werth's estimate of the number of victims in the Soviet Union — 15 million — is topped up by an extra 5 million in Courtois's preface.

Margolin says he had "never talked about there having been 1 million dead in Vietnam [at the hands of Ho Chi Minh]". A few weeks ago, he managed to persuade the publisher to change the book's title — it was originally going to be called Le Livre des Crimes Communistes (The Book of Communist Murders) — and to add the subtitle Crimes, Terreurs, Répressions.

The other fundamental criticism levelled at Courtois by his colleagues concerns the historical and logical parallels he draws between Nazism and communism. "The facts show that communist regimes committed murders involving about 100 million people, as against Nazism's 25 million-odd," Courtois writes. "The methods implemented by Lenin and systematised by Stalin and their like not only recall the Nazis' methods, but in many cases predate them."

He goes on to explain that in Russia in 1932-33 "'class' genocide was closely akin to 'racial' genocide. The death from hunger of a Ukrainian kulak's child who was deliberately starved by the Stalinist regime 'counts' for as much as the death from hunger of a Jewish child in the Warsaw ghetto who was starved by the Nazi regime."

That is an argument which distresses Werth and Margolin, who say: "Communism sees itself first and foremost as a doctrine of liberation for the majority of humans, whereas Nazism is a racist doctrine that casts the majority of humans into utter darkness."

"The elimination of class enemies certainly took place, but not of individuals or whole social classes," says Margolin. "Extermination camps did not exist in the Soviet Union," says Werth.

When questioned about this serious difference of opinion, Courtois retorts: "The whole team is leftwing, and because it's leftwing it asks itself questions."

"To begin with, Le Livre Noir du Communisme was a collective undertaking," Werth says with a sigh. "We got caught up in an infernal process by a publisher who was breathing down our necks. Then Stéphane's contribution took us from the scientific to the ideological arena. I'm disappointed and discouraged."

Le Livre Noir du Communisme; Crimes, Terreurs, Répressions. Editions Robert Laffont, 848pp, 189 francs

(October 31)



Skulls from Cambodia's killing fields: is totalitarianism indivisible in death? PHOTOGRAPH:DAVID BROWNE

Nazi parallels stick in the collective throat

Patrick Jarreau

WAS communism responsible for crimes against humanity in countries where it was the ruling system? Were communists all over the world accomplices to those crimes?

Robert Laffont has just published a 848-page collective work by six authors, entitled Le Livre Noir du Communisme, which sets out to evaluate, on the 80th anniversary of the October Revolution in Russia, the precise extent of atrocities committed by communist regimes wherever they have been in power — in the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.

In the book's preface, the historian Stéphane Courtois asks us to reflect on the "similarity" between the Nazi and communist systems. In his view, the crimes against humanity as originally defined at the Nuremberg trial of Nazi leaders in 1946 can be imputed to communist regimes.

In asserting this — and in taking his cue from François Furet, the historian who had agreed to preface the book but died last summer before he could do so — Courtois has sparked a major controversy.

His position has also caused the authors of the book to fall out: several of them have accused Courtois of using his preface and his conclusion to put a slant on their collective work that they did not expect and do not agree with.

The reference to crimes against humanity and to the Nuremberg trials recalls remarks made on several occasions by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of France's far-right party, the National Front. Le Pen's way of answering those who denounce the crimes of fascist and Nazi regimes is to point out that "the Nuremberg trials of communism" have not yet taken place.

Moreover, the book has come out at a time when Maurice Papon is being tried in Bordeaux for "complicity in crimes against humanity", because, on the order of his superiors, he organised the arrest and deportation of Jewish families in Bordeaux.

In the November 7 issue of the communist daily L'Humanité, five pages were devoted to the anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, which the French Communist party is not officially celebrating.

Referring to Le Livre Noir du Communisme's likening of communism to Nazism, the editor of the paper, Claude Cabanes, writes: "[The comparison] is personally unbearable for those communists who took up arms against the Nazi occupation. Quite apart from the private wound it may cause, it cannot stand up to the fundamental analysis which the great Italian writer, Primo Levi, on his return from the universe of concentration camps, encapsulated in a single remark: 'Nazism without the gas chambers is unthinkable; communism without the camps is thinkable'."

Last week, the France 2 television programme Bouillon de Culture was the scene of a clash between Courtois and Nicolas Werth (who is in other respects at variance with Courtois) on one side, and two people with communist convictions, Roland Leroy, a former editor of L'Humanité, and Roger Martelli, a member of the national committee, on the other.

The argument focused mainly on Courtois's comparison of communism with Nazism. In the view of Communist party members, who follow a line of defence adopted 20 years ago, the defence of the Stalinist system by French communists until the mid-1970s should not be allowed to obscure their commitment to the social and political struggles of the French left, nor, above all, their massive participation in the Resistance.

Communism in all its forms, in so far as it has, for propaganda needs, censored the news media and historical research, has regularly caused controversies that centre on the straightforward factual truth. There was more justification for such controversies at a time when communist parties, whether in power or exerting a political or intellectual influence, were in a position to conceal or misrepresent the facts.

The collapse of the Soviet system and the opening up of the archives have taken communist historiography out of the arena of political jousting and into the domain of research.

The controversy deliberately caused by Le Livre Noir du Communisme proves, however, that in a country where the communists got 30 per cent of the vote in 1946, and whose current government includes three members of the Communist party, the nature of the communist system and the meaning of communist commitment are embers that can always be fanned into flames.

(November 9-10)

Casualties of Utopia

Andrei Grachev, former Gorbachev spokesman, gives **Jean-Luc Douin** his view of the controversy

HOW do you see the conflict that has broken out among the authors of Le Livre du Communisme?

I'm prepared to comment purely as an observer. I would stress the need to avoid the pitfall of oversimplification. Reality contains too many contradictions to be subjected to a simplistic verdict. The cautions and dispassionate approach of the historian is what is needed. Let's beware the way this kind of issue can be exploited politically.

Did communism commit crimes against humanity?

There is a striking similarity between the two totalitarian systems. But to understand the difference between them you have to go back to their roots. Although in both cases there were colossal numbers of dead, it has to be remembered that the Western democracies were allies in the struggle against Nazism, but they did not become allies of Nazism in the struggle against communism.

Bolshevism took root when war ended, whereas war was the avowed method that Nazism used to achieve its ends. Nazism organised a racial conflict, communism a civil war. And any civil war has lethal consequences. This explains the embarrassment — when faced with such figures — of all those who have espoused communism at any time, and their need to snap out of the communist mindset.

Some of the finest intellectuals were won over by the communist ideal. Very few of the finest minds, the kind of people who stand for moral integrity, were won over by the Nazi enterprise. The communist Utopia created an internal conflict, where people clashed either as victims or as accomplices.

What direction should historical research into communism take?

Historical objectivity and truth hinge on something we must fight for — a complete opening up of the archives. When that happens, we may discover that certain figures have been exaggerated, or that others, gulag victims for example, have been diminished.

But whatever the figures, they cannot detract from the horror of such barbarity. If we want to bring this chapter in the history of the 20th century to a close, we must be in possession of the whole truth.

We must also eschew any political exploitation. What shocks me is the way the 1917 revolution has been marginalised. To make it out to be a *putsch* organised by a group of Lenin's supporters is a gratuitous way of denying its importance. Would the same method be applied to the storming of the Bastille? One has to be consistent.

(November 9-10)

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US Marines training in the Negev desert in southern Israel PHOTOGRAPH AVI MAUOL

Moscow Profits From Crisis

OPINION
Jim Hoagland

THE WORLD'S most important diplomats went without sleep last week to announce a nondeal aimed at nonchange in Iraq and the Middle East. Don't believe them. The world has changed in the past three weeks in ways that the bland pronouncements from Geneva cannot mask.

A quarter of a century ago, Henry Kissinger with brilliant duplicity shut the Russians out of the Middle East. Last week, Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright held Yevgeny Primakov's coat as the Russian foreign minister brought Moscow back into the region in a big way.

The zero-sum game of diplomatic competition for influence in the Middle East that supposedly died with the Cold War is on again, sparked by the opaque Baghdad-Moscow arrangement on U.N. weapons inspections and economic sanctions against Iraq announced near dawn in Geneva last week.

A return of Russia to world diplomacy need not be a bad thing in itself. Russia today is not the Soviet Union that Kissinger kept out of his shuttle diplomacy and relegated to a ceremonial role in the Geneva peace conference in 1974. Moscow is not even as meddlesome as it was in 1991, when Jim Baker used the Kissinger model to relaunch Arab-Israeli peace talks.

But the Clinton administration's wrong-footed acquiescence in letting Primakov play the lead diplomatic role in determining whether there would be war or peace in the Persian Gulf is a significant reversal of U.S. fortune both in Moscow and in the Middle East.

It underlines the total absence of meaningful U.S. diplomacy at a time of crisis in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Saddam Hussein and his old friend Primakov moved into the vacuum Clinton and his national security team willfully let develop in the Middle East over the past year and exploited it.

Since Kissinger, U.S. diplomats have labored mightily to avoid those two outcomes — vacuum in the Middle East, and encouragement of Kremlin hard-liners.

Even at the height of his administration's "Russia First" phase, Warren Christopher, Clinton's much maligned first secretary of state, firmly refused to let the Russians engineer a role for themselves in Middle East diplomacy. He made clear to Primakov in one prickly meeting in Damascus in April 1996 that any deal coming out of a region so vital to U.S. interests had to be managed overwhelmingly by the United States.

Significantly, Christopher was advised on Russian and Middle Eastern affairs by Dennis Ross. Albright has kept Ross on to shepherd the stalled Middle East talks, but her easy acceptance in Geneva of Primakov's assurances that Saddam will let the U.N. inspectors go back to work reveals that she is not listening to Ross.

Much more is involved than the position of one adviser, however central. The outcome of the Geneva meeting reveals President Clinton's disregard for, and disbelief in, balance of power politics as defined by Kissinger and others. In intellectual discussions unrelated to policy decisions, the president routinely dismisses narrow, self-interested diplomacy as "Old Think."

Any gains Moscow and Baghdad made were insignificant, Clinton's aides proclaimed last week, insisting that Washington was not part of any deal to ease sanctions and had not allowed its authority to be eroded.

That is not just New Think. That is Dangerous Think, in a part of the world less reformed than Clinton appears to believe.

Rich Countries Move to Curb Bribery in Business

Anne Swardson in Paris

THE 29 richest nations on earth, and five other countries, agreed last week to a treaty to outlaw business bribes to foreign public officials. It was the result of 20 years of U.S. pressure, seven years of discussion and two years of nose-to-nose negotiations and was proclaimed "a giant step for international business."

The agreement, negotiated between members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development plus Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile and the Slovak Republic, is to go into effect by early 1999.

However, the hard-fought accord has notable omissions, negotiators said. It does not fully ban bribes to officials of political parties, as opposed to holders of public office. It does not force countries to revoke the tax-deductibility of bribes, which many European nations permit. And it does not call for penalizing the bribe-takers — that is, the public officials.

"We obviously believe there still is work to be done," said Alan P. Larson, assistant U.S. secretary of state for economic and business affairs. "This is just one aspect of a multi-faceted effort, but we are satisfied it is a very significant accomplishment."

Since the adoption of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977, U.S. companies have complained that they are not on a level playing field when it comes to seeking contracts with foreign countries. American corporate bribes to foreign public officials are specifically outlawed under the act, while they are widely permitted or tolerated in Europe and Asia.

Pressure for bribes grew as developing nations acquired new wealth. Companies wishing to secure contracts with developing nations found themselves pushed harder to make payoffs, sometimes expensive ones. That did not always work — a U.S. government study found that about half of payoffs did not lead to contracts — but in the absence of a legal prohibition, it was hard to say no. "Corporations are discovering it's a mug's game," said David Aaron, the U.S. under-secretary of commerce for international trade and a former ambassador to the OECD who did much of the U.S. negotiating. "There was a change in the corporate culture and a recognition [that bribery] wasn't paying off any more."

Earlier this year, large European firms such as German manufacturer Daimler-Benz, Belgium's Petrofina and Italy's Pirelli began calling for anti-bribery legislation. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund began to speak out against corruption. In May, meeting at the OECD, negotiating countries agreed on the broad principle of making bribes to foreign officials a criminal offense. Though national legislation varies, generally speaking only the United States now does so.

Since May, the task has been to define who is covered by the anti-bribe agreement. Germany, Austria and Finland, for instance, fought the idea of making bribes to sitting legislators an offense. Then, after giving in on that issue last week, they and others opposed criminalizing bribes to political parties and to officials of state-owned or state-controlled enterprises.

Those countries lost on the second point, but the United States was forced to compromise on the first. Bribes that pass through political parties to legislators, or bribes to political parties on the orders of legislators, will be covered under the agreement, but others will not. The agreement also does not call for penalties for the politicians who take bribes, although there was general agreement that this is best handled by domestic anti-bribery laws.

U.S. officials said they have high hopes the agreement will come into effect swiftly. American and Mexican negotiators had pushed for it to come into force as soon as two participants ratified it, but they faced opposition from Europe, South Korea and Japan, which feared that the first countries to impose the penalties would face a competitive disadvantage. So a complex formula was arrived at by which the treaty will go into effect after five of the OECD's 10 largest members have ratified it or, at the latest, in early 1999.

Military Service Loses Appeal in Italy

Vera Haller in Rome

THE NUMBER of young Italian men who avoid military service by stating they are conscientious objectors has risen sharply in recent years, creating a large corps of community workers who shop for the disabled, tutor high school dropouts, organize outings for the elderly — and soon could be patrolling schoolyards to keep sex offenders at bay.

Instead of learning the ways of warfare, objectors are required to serve 10 months of civilian service — the same length of time as conscription — at one of roughly 3,000 organizations registered with the Defense Ministry. Among them are charities such as the Roman Catholic aid group Caritas, non-profit organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund, government ministries and city governments.

For the most part, objectors do traditional community service, such as working with the homeless, immigrants and disabled. But the government of Prime Minister Romano Prodi is considering extending their reach into a new area following a recent pedophilia case that has shocked the nation.

A 9-year-old boy who disappeared on his way to school in a town near Naples allegedly was killed by three men accused of sexually abusing him for months. Police said his attackers burned his body to cover up the murder, prompted when the boy threatened to tell his parents about the abuse. Under a proposal being considered by Prodi's cabinet, objectors could be posted outside schools to deter sex offenders from approaching students.

The number of those requesting conscientious objector status has grown quickly, this year rising to about 50,000. Few are true objectors; the increase is based in part on a shortening of the time required for civilian service, ambivalence toward the military and a sense of wanting to use their mandatory service time to do something many perceive as more worthwhile than performing military duties.

Faced with swelling ranks of objectors, Parliament is considering a law to regulate the requests and create a national civilian service corps, a type of institutionalized volunteerism.

Ezeo Laune is an example of Italy's conscientious objector of the 1990s. Educated and from a middle-class family, the 26-year-old mechanical engineering student said he wants to gain experience and help others, not serve in the military. He was assigned to the Caritas office in his home town of Brindisi, a port on Italy's southeastern Adriatic coast that has been the main receiving point of immigrants from Albania and other countries to the east.

His job, along with several other objectors, is to run a six-bed receiving center for immigrants. "We cook three meals a day for them, see they get medical attention, find them clothes and try to explain the bureaucracy so they can apply for working papers," he said. "We are on the front lines. I've never known real poverty, and now I do."

He said that he is happy with his decision. "The military would be a lot easier. They give you an order and you follow it. Here, we are responsible. My life has changed. I have to deal with situations I never imagined possible," he said.

The objectors are paid about $5 a day — the same as those in the military — and given room and board if their jobs require them to live away from home. "Many youths view military service as lost time, and they see civilian service as something more interesting, more useful," said Claudio di Blasi of the national Association of Nonviolent Objectors."

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Thousands of China Dissidents Still in Jail

Steven Mufson in Beijing

JUST after watching the Northwest Airlines flight carrying released Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng to the United States lift off the runway of Beijing's airport, U.S. Ambassador James Sasser popped open a bottle of champagne in the embassy car.

The moment had been more than a year in the making, and it brought an early end to a long prison term for China's most prominent political prisoner, who had been sentenced to serve another 12 years in jail.

But for other Chinese dissidents and political prisoners, it's too early to celebrate. The release of Wei on medical parole leaves perhaps a couple of thousand political prisoners in Chinese jails and many other dissidents under surveillance.

"We have to remember that he was not the only political or religious prisoner in China, and we need to continue to be concerned about those less famous than he," said Andrew J. Nathan, a professor of Chinese politics at Columbia University who serves on the board of Human Rights Watch/Asia.

Indeed, while Wei was settling into his first-class seat and the champagne was flowing down below, Wang Lingyun was at home resting after a visit two days earlier to see her son, Wang Dan, who is in a prison in China's northeast Liaoning Province. There the former student leader, who already served a four-year term for his part in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations, shares a room with five or six common criminals. Rearrested in 1995, the 28-year-old faces 10 more years in jail for his political activities.

"He has prepared himself for being in prison a very long time, and so have we," said Wang Lingyun, who learned of Wei's release when foreign reporters called for comment.

Meanwhile in another part of Beijing, physicist Xu Liangying, 77, learned of Wei's imminent release when the number of security police at his door was increased. Xu, who translated Albert Einstein's works into Chinese, has been an outspoken critic of the government and usually is monitored closely during sensitive political events. Xu met Wei about 10 times during the brief period Wei was not in jail in late 1993 and early 1994.

"I hope that the government releases everyone charged with political offenses, but whether or not they'll do that is unclear," Xu said. "To release one or two is a way to bargain."

A U.S. official said China would watch how Wei is received and treated before deciding about prisoners such as Wang Dan. Before releasing Wei, Chinese officials sought assurances from the United States that senior administration officials would not meet Wei or try to exploit him to embarrass the Chinese government. "Whether there will be other releases depends on how we treat this one," an official said.

Still, many people hope Wei's release will be a first step. When asked about the prospects that Wang also might be released on medical parole, Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said, "I think this kind of situation in the past occurred frequently. In the future I think it will continue."

Wang Dan's mother said her son applied for medical parole six months ago, but neither he nor his family has received any indication it will be granted. "Of course we hope there's some sort of change," she said, adding that her son is suffering from a chronic throat infection. "His situation has a lot to do with internal and international politics as everyone knows."

If Wang Dan is released, it is widely believed he would be sent to the United States, too, and he has agreed to leave if released. But that will mean few changes in the conditions that put him and others in jail in the first place. Those who live here and criticize the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly on political power still risk long prison terms.

"Of course this cuts both ways," said a spokesman for Amnesty International. "On the one hand he [Wei] is free; on the other he is forced into exile. This fits the pattern of China getting rid of its dissidents without allowing the internal space for dissent."

Before flying to the United States last month for his state visit, Chinese President Jiang Zemin argued that Americans shouldn't view the issue of human rights in China as they would see it in the United States. "Both democracy and human rights are relative concepts and not absolute and general," Jiang said in an interview. "One country's human-rights situation cannot be separated from the actual conditions of that country."

But the dissident physicist Xu said that the standard for human rights is like a natural law. "The concept of human rights is the same all around the world," he said. "The idea that it could be different is baloney."

Hard-Line Cuban Exile Leader Dies

Donald P. Baker in Miami

THE DEATH here last Sunday of Jorge Mas Canosa, who dreamed that one day he might succeed his communist nemesis, Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, as a democratically elected president of his homeland, creates a leadership vacuum among the nation's 1.5 million Cuban Americans, 1 million of whom live here in South Florida.

"We are not concerned about who will replace him because he is irreplaceable," said Francisco "Pepe" Hernandez, president of the 200,000-family Cuban American National Foundation, which Mas and two other refugees founded and used as the platform to influence policy in the White House and Congress.

But Hernandez pledged, "There will be others, perhaps many who are in our midst at the present time" who will continue the campaign to isolate the Castro regime in hopes that it will wilt or be overthrown. Most of the potential successors are part of a younger generation, some of whom, unlike most foundation stalwarts, were born in the United States. Yet nearly all of them espouse a similar hard line on dealings with Cuba.

Much attention here is likely to focus on Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas, if only because he is a skillful politician who is not shy in a spotlight. The 36-year-old lawyer, whose office was given new power a year ago, is the state's most visible Hispanic official.

Three other politicians also may take a greater role in trying to shape U.S. policy toward Cuba. That trio of congressional representatives — Miami Republicans Lincoln Diaz-Balart, 43 and a native of Cuba, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, 45, and New Jersey Democrat Robert Menendez, 45 — issued a joint statement saying Mas "would not wish that the pain of his passing cause pessimism among Cuba's freedom fighters. Our best homage to his memory is to continue to fight until Cuba is free."

As word of Mas' death spread through Miami's Little Havana, three foundation executives also were mentioned as possible successors: Carlos de Cespedes, 47, a businessman who heads the foundation's political action committee, which has contributed more than $25 million to political candidates since its founding in 1980; Alberto Hernandez, 60, a physician who is vice chairman of the foundation board; and Hernandez, 61, an economist who spent two years in a Cuban prison after taking part in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion.

Although all of those are considered hard-liners in the Mas mold, it is now possible that moderate voices also may be heard, such as Elyo Gutierrez-Menoyo, 62, leader of Cambio Cubano, or Cuban Change, who advocates normalizing relations with the Castro regime.

Hoffa Leads In Battle for Teamsters

Frank Swoboda and Sharon Walsh

TO HIS detractors in the union he's simply known as "junior," the beefy son of the infamous Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa.

James P. Hoffa, they insist, would take the union back to the bad old days, when the Teamsters' name was synonymous with corruption. "Hoffa represents everything we have fought against for 21 years," said Ken Paff, who heads the Detroit-based union reform group Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

That kind of talk doesn't fly with Hoffa. "These are the bad old days. These are the dark days," he said in an interview last week. What, he asked, could be worse than having the president of the union accused of stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from the members?

Today, with Teamsters President Ron Carey disqualified from running for re-election because of his alleged involvement in a series of illegal campaign financing schemes, James P. Hoffa is the clear favorite to become the next president of the 1.4 million member union, when a new election is held next year.

But Hoffa's prospects are clouded. Local Teamsters leaders close to Hoffa are under investigation by three grand juries and the Labor Department. And last week a federal official overseeing the election ordered an investigation into Carey campaign allegations of improper fund-raising by the Hoffa campaign.

The investigations did nothing to deter Hoffa from his continued attacks on Carey. "We've had six years of Ron Carey. The union is bankrupt and we're hopelessly divided," he said, offering himself



James Hoffa Jr., son of the infamous Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa, talking to the media last week
PHOTO: CARLOS OSORIO

up as "a man who puts the members first."

Ironically, Hoffa said his first order of business as president would be to raise more money for the union. "Money is power and power is money. We're broke. Ron Carey has made us beggars," he said. For the first six months of 1997, the union reported a net loss of $4.9 million.

Now, the reform movement Carey once led is in disarray, without a well-known national candidate to lead it and hampered by a set of federally mandated election rules that prohibit his old running mates from forming a new slate. TDU, credited by many with engineering Carey's first election victory six years ago, has vowed to press on without him. But it's unclear just who will lead the reformers in the new election, and whether the candidates elected on Carey's slate last year can continue to claim the mantle of reformers.

Two possible candidates are Tom Leedham, the principal officer of Local 206 in Portland, Oregon, and director of the Teamsters Warehouse Division, and George Cashman, president of Local 25 in Boston. Leedham would have the strong support of TDU while Cashman might attract more potential Hoffa voters. But neither man has anything like the name recognition that Carey and Hoffa have.

Still young by the standards of most labor leaders at age 56, Hoffa is an energetic man who has spent most of the last two years crisscrossing the country visiting plant gates and car barns, pressing the flesh with rank-and-file union members in his quest for the Teamsters presidency, confident that his name alone will draw a crowd and the TV cameras.

At rally after rally, he talks of restoring union power and the need to negotiate better contracts. He tells how he learned the business at his father's knee. He tells crowds how his father could afford to send him to college and then to law school because of the union.

Although a dues-paying member of the Teamsters for more than 25 years, Hoffa was barred from running for the presidency in 1991 because he hadn't worked for the union in his craft for a minimum of two years, a requirement for holding union office. Since then he has worked as an administrative assistant to Michigan Teamsters leader Larry Brennan, himself a son of the union's old-guard leadership.

When asked last year what he thinks happened to his father, who disappeared in 1975, Hoffa said he thought his father's body probably had been sent to a meat-rendering plant in the Midwest.

Hoffa brushes aside most questions about his ties to the old guard, and dismisses charges that he would seek to return the union to the corruption of the past. "No one is saying that except my enemies. The only people saying that are a handful of Ron Carey supporters," Hoffa said last week.

In fact, many of the constitutional changes Hoffa proposed at last year's Teamsters convention in Philadelphia read like they were written by the TDU, including a confirmation of the federal government's continuing power over the union under the terms of a 1989 consent decree signed by the leadership to settle the Justice Department's civil racketeering suit.

In last year's election, the Carey campaign alleged that Hoffa had improper ties to employers and corrupt elements in the labor movement. Hoffa won't respond to those allegations. "My record stands for itself," he said.

Supporters of Teamsters reform are still trying to hammer home the point that Hoffa is no angel. One of Hoffa's closest union associates has been removed from his office and others are under the scrutiny of federal prosecutors, as well as racketeering investigators from the Labor Department and the FBI, according to investigators and court records.

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Senegal Fishermen Struggle to Survive

Stephen Buckley in Mbour

NEARLY two hours ago, when two fishing boats began their day's journey in the early morning, the sun was warm and soothing. Now it is sharp and hot, like shards of glass on the skin.

And the boats have not a single fish to show for their toil. They have not even been able to put down a net. They slice through the glistening, clear green Atlantic Ocean waters, four miles offshore, seeking fish, but the men aboard spot only clusters of sardines. They see no fish they can sell.

Maguette Dieng, fisherman in charge of these two boats, recalls days when he could go out a quarter-mile or a half-mile and find enough fish to fetch hundreds of dollars from wholesalers. Now, with a flood of industrial vessels, many from abroad, and overwhelming numbers of Senegalese fishermen invading these waters, he is lucky to find fish even this far out.

"We used to try to catch what we wanted," Dieng, 27, speaking in his native language, Wolof, said through an interpreter. "Now we catch what we find."

Dieng's day-to-day struggle to survive is mirrored in countless lives around this continent. Thirty-one countries in sub-Saharan Africa lie on the Atlantic or Indian oceans. Some rely hardly at all on the sea because of limited coastline or lack of harbors; others, notably Senegal, depend heavily on fishing as a livelihood and for government revenues.

But in recent years, traditional, or small-scale, fishermen in this West African country have seen their individual catches shrink as fishing has become more lucrative. They have seen fellow fishermen, as well as more than two dozen industrial vessels from Asia, Canada and Europe, carve into their piece of the Atlantic.

"When fish want to move closer to the coast, the big European boats catch them first," Dieng said. "It's not good for us, but it's very profitable for the Europeans."

For people such as Dieng, the sea is not just the source of family income. Five generations of his family have labored as fishermen. The sea is as important to him as air itself.

"All my life depends on the sea, on the ocean," he said. "My whole family depends on the sea — my father, my brothers, my wife, my children."

Yet Dieng's father, Djibe Ndiaye, does not know if his five grandsons will say the same thing. "Life will be harder for my grandsons because of the reduction of fish resources," said Djibe Ndiaye, 55. "So they will have to try doing something else, and that will be very difficult."

It is hard to overstate how much a town such as Mbour, 50 miles south of Senegal's capital, Dakar, relies on the sea. Families eat fish several times a day. Some schools get their ink for pens from cuttlefish. Shark vertebrae are fashioned into necklaces for tourists, and dried, gutted moonfish become lamps. Seaside sand is mixed with cement for bricks. Rocks from the beach form foundations for houses.

By late afternoon, as dozens of fishing boats return to shore, the beach is a sweaty, noisy, teeming place, where a smothering stench — raw fish — catches in clothes and in pores.

The squishy splat of dead fish tumbling onto sand fills the air. Clouds of flies zigzag into hair and ears. All over the shore, men scale, gut, smash, slice, smoke and pile up fish. The beach is filled with women sitting with fish stacked neatly before them. Sometimes young men from the boats hustle past with plastic buckets overflowing with a catch they are loading onto a wholesaler's truck.

The seaside is an all-day market, where fishermen can buy everything from cigarettes to sunglasses to a nice shirt-and-trousers ensemble. Women nurse their babies by the water. Men kneel and bow eastward and pray.

Babacar Ndiaye, Dieng's grandfather, said what galls him most these days is that fishermen do not care much about their craft. "You have to be trained, you have to learn the techniques of fishing," he said, "just as if you were going to school for anything else."

Ndiaye began fishing on his own at 12, after his father trained him for five years. Ndiaye used to be out on the water by 4am, returning around sunset. He would go home for a few hours, then be back in the water all night. He followed the stars for direction and used the moon for light.

He spent so much time on the water that when a fish caught his hook, he immediately knew what it was. "The dorado acts like a hen on the hook," he said. "The grouper comes and swallows the whole hook."

The number of fishermen using traditional methods has soared in recent years. The number climbed by nearly 8 percent between 1991 and 1995, topping 50,000, and economic analysts expect the increase to continue. In 1991, small-scale fishermen snagged 249,724 tons of fish. By 1995, that figure had risen to 265,744 tons.

As a result, fishing has become sharply competitive. Wholesalers took over the scene, and fishermen scrambled to sell to them. And industrial vessels, once rare, became increasingly numerous.

"Today, fishermen can make money," said Djibe Ndiaye. "They know how to save it, and earn more. It's good because they can use that money to go into another business. The bad side is that the government doesn't help [small-scale fishermen] anymore. The government favors the larger boats."

It does so because vessels from Europe, Asia and Canada pay huge fees — one reason fishing generates an estimated 70 percent of the Senegalese government's annual revenues. Earlier this year, Senegal signed a four-year agreement with the European Union allowing fishing vessels from EU countries into close-in waters long dominated by traditional fishermen.

A report by the Senegalese and Japanese governments, yet to be released officially, warns that some species of fish are dwindling fast and that wise management of the sea is crucial to the future of Senegal's economy.

The report notes that in Senegal, a host of basic management strategies — such as designating minimum mesh sizes for nets and creating fishing seasons for traditional fishermen — "are almost [all] lacking."

The rise in the number of fishermen has meant that more people catch fish. And more people return to shore with empty nets. "In the past, the days [when I came back without fish] were less frequent," Dieng said. "Now it's very frequent."

Dieng, at 27, is considered the senior fisherman, the following day he supervises, overseeing the operation once the first boat — the Matar Gueye — puts its net down.

This morning, whenever the helmsman of the Matar Gueye spies birds hovering, the vessel glides toward that area. Usually, the birds follow the fish these boats are looking for — dorado, grouper, sea bass, catfish, capitain. Today, however, the birds seem to follow schools of tiny fish, or nothing at all.

Meanwhile, on the 25-foot Mbaye Thoufi Gueye, Dieng leaps along the rails and edges of the boat as though it were his living room. It is clear the boat is no place for cowards. There is no radar, no compass, no weather bulletin, no sonar, no life preserver.

At 10:50, the Matar Gueye finally lets out its net. A line of young men spool out the mesh as nine boys plunge into the water to spread it. Dieng's boat approaches the Matar Gueye, circles near the net. Everyone waits. Twenty minutes later, the Matar Gueye crew starts to pull in the net.

Dieng leans over the side of his boat, a few feet away from the other. He is worried. "We didn't catch many," he said. "Otherwise, it wouldn't be so easy for these guys. When you catch a lot of fish, it's really hard to pull up the net."

He is right. They haul in several small yellow-finned fish and a larger fish with a menacing tapered mouth and saw-like teeth. "We got a big one, a big one," Dieng said. "We get a lot of these, and we can make a lot of money." They get only four big ones. This day, they are not going to make money.

Maybe Dieng's sons will grow up to shun the sea. Maybe they will fish for a few years, then pursue another business. But their father has no such luxury. The next morning he is again out on the sea.

"I have no other alternative," he said. "I would never consider doing anything else. I was born a fisherman, and I will be a fisherman until the day I die."

The people of Mbour crowd onto the beach as fishing boats are unloaded
PHOTOGRAPH: CAROL GUZY

Papers Reveal Anti-Castro Dirty Tricks

George Lardner Jr. and Walter Pincus

WHEN JOHN GLENN lifted off into space in a Mercury Capsule on February 20, 1962, military planners at the Pentagon were thinking of blaming Fidel Castro if the astronaut failed to come down again.

The proposal was called "Operation Dirty Trick" and, according to long-secret documents made public last week, the idea was "to provide irrevocable proof that, should the manned orbit flight fail, the fault lies with the Communists et al, Cuba."

This could be accomplished, the planners suggested in a February 2, 1962, memo, "by manufacturing various pieces of evidence which would prove electronic interference on the part of the Cubans."

Glenn, of course, returned safely after becoming the first American to orbit Earth. But the memo, addressed to Air Force Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, head of Operation Mongoose, an elaborate scheme aimed at promoting revolt in Cuba, was full of other suggestions, some of them quite zany.

There was, for instance, "Operation Good Time," which would have fabricated a photograph of "an obese Castro with two beauties in any situation desired" near "a table brimming over with the most delectable Cuban food," accompanied by the caption, "My ration is different."

"This should put even a Commie dictator in the proper perspective with the underlying masses," the memo said.

The covert action proposals were among 1,500 pages of previously classified records made public by the Assassination Records Review Board, a small agency overseeing the release of records related to the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy.

"It's our sense that the assassination was part of a larger set of issues," said board member Anna Nelson. "What we're trying to do is provide context."

After the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, Kennedy convened a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) to discuss what to do next about Cuba.

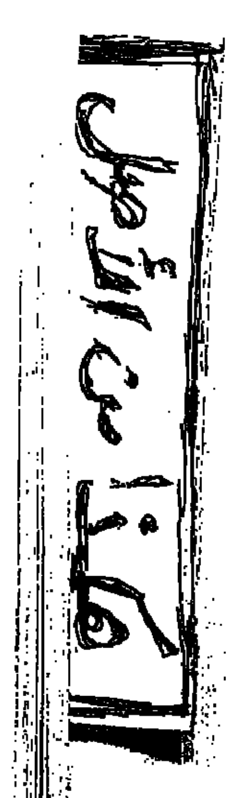
According to a memo for the record that appeared to contain exact quotes from the session, the president said guerrilla operations should be discontinued, but asked "whether we should form a Cuban Foreign Legion, trained as a volunteer force." CIA Director Allen Dulles said that if this were done, "it should be done overtly."

Secretary of State Dean Rusk suggested that anti-Castro Cubans could simply be enlisted in the Army, but Kennedy said they did not want to enlist, but "to be trained for the overthrow of Castro."

One of the items assigned for study "on an urgent basis" in the wake of the Bay of Pigs fiasco was what the United States would do if faced with several contingencies, including "establishment of a Soviet missile base" in Cuba. The State Department was told to study the matter. The discovery of Soviet missiles on Cuba in the autumn of 1962 provoked one of the tensest episodes of the Cold War.

At another NSC meeting on May 5, 1961, the records show, "it was agreed that U.S. policy should aim at the downfall of Castro." At the Pentagon, one contingency plan followed another.

However, other assessments suggested that overthrowing Castro would not be easy. A CIA report in April 1962 cited "probable reactions to a U.S. military intervention in Cuba." It warned that Castro had made extensive preparations to resist and though some Cubans would welcome the U.S. military, "at least as many more would regard it as designed to reimpose upon the Cuban people the yoke of 'Yankee imperialism.'" As a result, the CIA said, "a prolonged U.S. military occupation of Cuba would probably be necessary."



Eavesdropping in The Oval Office

ILLUSTRATION: RANDY MAYS

Richard J. Barnet

TAKING CHARGE
The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964
Edited by Michael R. Beschloss
Simon & Schuster. 591 pp. $30

PRESIDENT Lyndon Johnson taped about 9,500 of his private conversations, starting the day he took the oath of office and ending shortly before he left the White House. Taking Charge, the first volume in a series, is based on 240 hours of talk recorded during his first nine months in office. The historian Michael Beschloss, who selected and edited the tapes, provides a helpful commentary throughout the book, identifying the cast of characters whose words are being recorded without their knowledge. Occasionally, he will comment on the truthfulness or hidden significance of what Johnson is saying, but in most cases he wisely lets the president's words speak for themselves.

The result is a fascinating portrait of an imposing, manipulative, driven, conflicted, and surprisingly vulnerable character whose political ambitions had suddenly been achieved under frightening circumstances. Johnson's immediate reaction to the assassination of John F. Kennedy was that it was a Soviet plot and that it might be followed by an all-out nuclear attack. But within days he was convinced that the Soviets were not involved. The great danger, as he explained to Sen. Richard Russell, was a congressional investigation in which "they're testifying that Khrushchev and Castro did this and did that and kicking us into a war that can kill forty million Americans in an hour."

The Warren Commission was an attempt to use the prestige of prominent Americans to forestall this and to forge a bipartisan consensus that would put conspiracy rumors to rest. In these transcripts, we see how Johnson sandbagged Russell to get him on the commission; the president announced the appointment before the Georgia Democrat had accepted and without telling him that Chief Justice Earl Warren, whom Russell profoundly disliked, had already agreed to serve as chairman.

The story of LBJ's relationship to Robert Kennedy has been told often, but the tapes make clear that he was obsessed with the dead president's younger brother. Johnson was prone to see Bobby's hand in any unfavorable press account of his administration, and he was convinced that the attorney general was plotting to snatch the Democratic nomination from him in 1964.

Throughout the time covered by this engrossing book, LBJ is preoccupied with two central issues, either of which could have derailed his presidency. The first is the Civil Rights Act, a Kennedy bill that had been stalled in Congress. We see him flattering and cajoling senators to enlist their support, and admonishing Hubert Humphrey for a wire service story in which he is quoted as saying that the president might compromise on the bill: "That's not my position. I'm against any amendment. I'm going to be against them right up until I sign them . . ."

The civil rights bill passes, but a crisis looms over the seating of the all-black Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Johnson is convinced that seating the blacks will cost him the election. The president tells his aide Walter Jenkins that he is going to quit and go home and shows him a statement he intended to make: "The times require . . . a voice that men of all parties and sections and color can follow . . . I am not that voice . . . I suggest . . . that no consideration be given to me because I am absolutely unavailable."

Was this a ploy to force a compromise at the convention? Probably. But his conversations just before the convention suggest that he was truly depressed. He was much more upset by attacks in the press than his public demeanor suggested, and having had a massive heart attack nine years earlier, he was worried whether he could stand the strain of four more years in the White House. "I don't want to be in this place [incapacitated] like [Woodrow] Wilson," he told Jenkins. But a compromise was reached on the Mississippi delegation and all talk of going back to Texas abruptly stopped.

The second critical issue is Vietnam. From the first the shadow of the war hung over the new administration. About a week after Johnson takes office, William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, tells the president, "I just think that it is a hell of a situation . . . I'll be goddamned if I don't think it's hopeless." A few days later Sen. Russell tells him, "We should get out, but I don't know any way to get out." McGeorge Bundy tells him that "90 percent of the people" want no part of an Asian war. Johnson himself does not know what to do. He senses the disastrous consequences of sending troops to Vietnam, but he is not going to be the president who "lost" Southeast Asia. He desperately wants to postpone the tough decisions until after the election, but the North Vietnamese attack on a U.S. destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin and the reports of a second attack (which probably did not take place) push him to authorize a retaliatory strike on North Vietnam. As the book ends, he is already contemplating the wider war he will tell the voters he does not seek.

There is a tragic quality to the discussions about Vietnam. At the highest levels of government, over a critical nine-month period, there is much talk of dominoes falling and the need to demonstrate force. But there is no precise analysis or even conjecture about the likely domestic and foreign policy consequences of waging war in Vietnam or of avoiding it. (It is hard to believe that Beschloss would not have included such conversations had they existed.) In the spring of 1964, Johnson tells Russell, "I don't think the people of the country know much about Vietnam and I think they care a hell of a lot less." But the president knew they would care once the bodies came home.

When Forgetfulness Is a Blessing

Thomas J. Rimer

THE DANCING GIRL OF IZU
And Other Stories
By Yasunari Kawabata
Translated from the Japanese
by J. Martin Holman
Counterpoint. 160 pp. $22

"AS DEATH approaches, memory erodes," writes Kawabata in one of the graceful and often unsettling stories contained in this new collection. These few words reveal the themes that pervade these diverse tales, but can only begin to suggest their range and subtlety.

Kawabata (1899-1972), the first Japanese writer to receive the Nobel Prize, in 1968, has long been known in the United States and Europe for such novels as The Sound Of The Mountain, Snow Country and others that often hark back to the traditions of classical Japanese literature. He employs devices from those long poetic traditions in order to create in modern prose his remarkable effects: juxtapositions of image upon image to open up the depths of feeling lurking behind placid surface reality. These stories, most of them composed when he was a young writer, serve as a reminder that he was then fascinated by the work of the European imagists and symbolists, who often used similar techniques in order to move from fact to suggestion.

Many of the 20-odd stories that make up this collection are only a few pages in length. A number of them are justly famous in Japan, but only one, "The Dancing Girl of Izu," has received wide circulation in translation, in a slightly shortened version by the great Edward Seidensticker, first published in the 1960s and available in a variety of editions over the years. "The Dancing Girl," like many other stories included here, contain strong autobiographical elements, but these are used not for their own sake, as possible self-revelations, but as a means to suggest the difficulties of penetrating toward any kind of ultimate truth.

This conviction, so important to an understanding of Kawabata's basic artistic stance, is most clearly revealed in the second story, "Diary of My Sixteenth Year." The story contains three layers: the narrative itself, an afterword appended in 1925, and a second afterword attached still later. The material presented in the tale itself, Kawabata tells his readers in the first afterword, is taken from his teenage diary and concerns his attempts to care for his dying grandfather, by then his only close relative. The old man grows weaker as the story progresses. Kawabata tells us in the second afterword that he was to die some eight days later.

It is easy to see why he was regarded as such a precocious writer, for the description of the old man, from his incoherent mumblings to his seemingly constant need to urinate, is gripping to read, particularly when experienced through the consciousness of the young boy, who is forced to help the situation along as best he can. According to the first afterword, in his published version Kawabata added only an occasional parenthesis to the original text, in order to identify persons and places and, occasionally, to augment his memories of his own responses. In the second afterword, however, he acknowledges that "since I wrote that first Afterword as fiction, there are some parts that differ from the truth." He proceeds to make further corrections and suggestions, then makes the following statement, which goes to the core of his ambitions in this short but remarkable work:

"I cannot simply imagine that something has 'vanished' or 'been lost' in the past just because I do not recall it. This work was not meant to resolve the puzzle of forgetfulness and memory. Neither was it intended to answer the questions of time and life. But it is certain that it offers a clue, some piece of evidence."

In resolutely seeking for such clues, Kawabata removes "Diary" from that genre of nihilistic literary games so much practiced in the West in the postwar years. For Kawabata, the fact that we cannot know is perhaps more an occasion for chagrin, for humility. "Bad as my memory is," he writes, "I have no firm belief in memory. There are times when I feel that forgetfulness is a blessing."

Other stories in the first part of this collection circle around the sense of loss that Kawabata felt as a youngster over the many deaths in his family, and how this radical loneliness marked his very conceptions of reality. No wonder, as he records in one of these stories, he was referred to as "The Master of Funerals."

The book's second section contains a number of brief stories that reveal Kawabata's ability to put a moment of poetic vision into a page or two of striking prose. These sketches, often referred to as haiku-like, reveal his penchant for the excitements of literary experimentation. Many are purely lyrical. Some reveal an acute sense of the social conditions found in interwar Japan, such as "The Money Road," which describes some remarkable events that took place after the great earthquake of 1923 virtually destroyed Tokyo, or "The Sea," which describes with understated poignancy the plight of Korean laborers in the Japanese countryside.

Given the difficulties of Kawabata's subtle and difficult language, the translator, J. Martin Holman, has generally struck an excellent balance between accuracy and the need to create a certain level of evocative possibility. Holman is to be congratulated for making available in English a number of striking works by this now-classic Japanese author. He chose well from among the various possibilities available to him.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 30 1997

Fast action from West needed to stem Asian tidal wave

COMMENT
Alex Brummer

AS WE know so clearly in the UK from the dramas at Barings and Bank of Credit and Commerce International, financial collapses in globalised financial markets are no longer national affairs. The collapse of Japan's Yamaichi, one of the world's top 10 investment houses, is a problem for the whole global financial system. It could not come at a worse time or in a worse part of the world.

The timing, just as South Korea opens its negotiations on a $20 billion package from the International Monetary Fund, means that world financial officials will need to focus on twin problems at the same time: the implosion at one of the fattest tigers and cracks in the Japanese banking system. The two are not unconnected.

All the indications are that the South Korean banking system is close to bankruptcy, too. Under more normal circumstances, as a matter of Asian pride, Japan as the second largest economy in the world might have been expected to apply the balm by making available large lines of credit from its own financial system. But it is in no condition to do so. With the potential for a domino reaction within its own banking structure, following the Yamaichi catastrophe, the Bank of Japan will have enough to do looking after its own, without becoming too deeply embroiled in the Korean tangle.

All the turmoil that has been seen in global markets this autumn has originated in the Far East. First, there were the assaults on the fixed exchange rate links to the dollar in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, which swept the system into the sea. This led to large-scale devaluations, resulting in the IMF being called in across the Pacific to a region that, for the past 20 years, appeared to have transcended the laws of gravity.

Second, it was on the Hong Kong stock market in October that the losses, which at one point wiped more than 500 points off the Dow Jones, began. It is entirely possible that the events of October will be seen as no more than a dress rehearsal for the more alarming turbulence to come.

Despite the criticisms that have been made of globalisation, it has delivered — across the Pacific, in Latin America, in the transition countries of Russia and eastern Europe and parts of Africa — access to capital markets, which enabled governments to press ahead with economic reforms and development. As the World Bank has shown in its work on East Asia, it has not necessarily greatly improved the distribution of wealth among social classes.

But, as the IMF said in its updated October 1997 World Economic Outlook report, Asia has become the region of highest risk. The IMF makes clear that the large swing in asset prices seen in Japan and Southeast Asia poses threats to the "soundness of financial systems" and a more broadly based problem for stock markets and economic confidence.

That is not all. The IMF, which is now having to sort this mess out, also noted that the flow of capital from the West to the emerging markets — $244 billion last year — is determined "by global cyclical conditions and vulnerable to higher interest rates".

The question is how do the national authorities and the international policemen deal with this. Japan itself, whatever the short-term domestic risks, has to learn the Barings/BCCI lesson. That is that no single institution, whatever its pedigree, should be propped up.

The Bank of Japan has a duty to step in and assist in the orderly unwinding of positions, in which the main risk takers, the shareholders and bondholders, pay the price even if that depresses the equity markets.

The concern of the Bank of Japan has to be contagion and systemic risk, not the protection of a single interest group, however strong its political connections. One of the enduring lessons of events in Southeast Asia is that bankers and economic officials make a historic error when they ignore the political context of their loans.

The most reassuring aspect of the seismic shifts in the global economy is that the United States has been alert to events. It also can claim virtue: its budget deficit has been all but eliminated; growth is solid but not spectacular; inflation and interest rates are subdued; and the banking system looks well capitalised and better able to take the shocks than it was seven years ago.

If there is a problem it is on Capitol Hill, where fast-track trade negotiations have been stymied and funding for the IMF, international rescues and global institutions is seen as waste. The challenge for President Clinton, the Treasury secretary, Robert Rubin, and the federal reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan, is to take on these attitudes and win through.

The twin problems of South Korea and the Japanese banking system are an economic security danger: they must be approached with the same speed and leadership qualities seen at the time of the Mexico crisis in 1994/95. If necessary, the Western exchequers will need to open their coffers after laying down specific reform conditions: this is too destabilising a series of events to do anything else.

New Labour, new depths

Targeting single parents for spending cuts fills **Larry Elliot** with disgust

AMID all the euphoria surrounding Labour's election victory, one fact is perhaps overlooked. Many people on the left were highly suspicious about the rightward drift of the party under Tony Blair and voted for him only after a period of agonising soul-searching. I know because I was one of them.

Six months later, the Prime Minister asks us to keep faith with him. He cannot understand why a poll in last Sunday's Observer showed that he is losing the public's trust.

Let's try to explain. We didn't support Labour in the expectation that the party would take fat cheques from the boss of Formula One and then exempt motor racing from the ban on tobacco advertising. We don't see it as acceptable to contemplate taxing payments to the disabled, and we see it as positively nauseating to see the Government conniving with the Conservative plan to cut the benefits of single parents.

Let's get one thing straight. The case for the UK Treasury to take the lid off public spending is weak. Running a tight fiscal ship is good economics; with the pound at its high levels, reducing the budget deficit takes the pressure off the Bank of England to push up interest rates. It is not good government — nor remotely Keynesian — to run a big budget deficit in perpetuity.

A Treasury paper released this week argues that the economy is at a similar stage of its cycle to 1986, just as the UK was gearing up for the Lawson boom of 1987-88. Then, as now, the economy was slightly above trend but the Government misread a cyclical improvement in the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) for a structural shift. Lawson believed his own rhetoric about "the miracle economy"; and the result was that fiscal policy was loosened when it should have been tightened. Gordon Brown is determined to avoid making the same mistake, particularly in the light of Labour's past tendency to go bananas on public spending in the first couple of years of a Parliament, only to be forced into painful and unpopular retrenchment in years three, four and five.

The paper is a warning shot across the bows of the rest of the Cabinet. It illustrates just how quickly the non-adjusted PSBR can lurch from surplus into substantial deficit, and is meant to provide ammunition for the Chancellor to swat away calls for more cash for health, education, transport and so on.

From a macro-economic viewpoint, the Government's logic is perfectly sound. But from a micro-economic stance it is absurd. Accepting that the size of the public spending cake will be no bigger than that baked by Kenneth Clarke doesn't mean that the cake has to be cut the same way.

Indeed, the attacks on single parents' benefits are intellectually dishonest. Mr Clarke's plans for this year were supposed to be sacrosanct, with no movement of resources between departments. That principle was breached when the Treasury raided the Department of Trade and Industry and Defence budgets for $500 million for the health service this winter.

Single parents don't carry the same political clout. Although they pay billions of pounds in taxes (excise duties and VAT, in particular) they are not big donors to the Labour party and so don't have Bernie Ecclestone's ability to seek meetings in Downing Street.

The second point is that there is more than one way of keeping the budget deficit under control. If memory serves well, the argument Labour used against putting a 50 pence tax rate on people earning more than £100,000 ($170,000) a year was that the £1 billion raised was simply not worth the aggro.

YET the amount raised by scrapping the higher single-parent rate of both child benefit and income support will be the princely sum of £390 million over three years. One might think that a party committed to social justice would be happy to slap a £1 billion levy on those whooping it up in the City with their lavish Christmas bonuses so that it could increase help for single parents. Not a bit of it.

The stock response to this argument is that Labour doesn't break its promises, and it swore to all those people earning above £100,000 that they wouldn't have to pay more income tax. Apparently, the Government would rather contemplate taxing Disability Living Allowance (thereby not breaking a manifesto commitment) than putting up tax on the very richest people in Britain.

It is beside the point for the Government to say that it is earmarking £200 million from the Welfare to Work programme to help single parents find jobs. In an ideal world, it might be better for single parents to be earning a living wage rather than being stuck on benefits.

But ministers are really only targeting mothers with children of school age. What about those with toddlers and those who don't want their children to come back to an empty home?

In any case, we already know that removing these top-ups for lone parents will make them less rather than more likely to work. How do we know this? Easy. Helpfully, Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, explained it all to us in November last year when she responded to Mr Clarke's plan thus: "The abolition [of one parent benefit] will make working lone mothers worse off and discourage work amongst this group. Lone Parent Premium recognises that lone parents face additional costs in bringing up their children — they do not have a partner's time or income to help with children."

Ms Harman has changed her tune. The new line is that it is vital that the Government should not be forced into a U-turn on this. One can see the point. It would never do to make U-turns on cold-weather payments to pensioners or single parent benefits. That might give the impression that ministers were prepared to cave in to the hunting lobby and the tobacco companies.

Mr Blair dropped some hints last weekend that he might make some concessions to his backbench critics on single benefits. Let us hope that the Chancellor takes the opportunity afforded by this week's pre-Budget report to announce that he is rescinding the Tory cut. Labour argues that getting tough with single parents makes them look macho.

As someone who, in a rush of blood, rejoined the party this autumn, I have to say it does no such thing. It is shabby and shameful.

In Brief

THE battle for supremacy between Airbus and Boeing intensified as the European group beat its US rival to land a $1.7 billion contract for 34 aircraft with Belgian flag-carrier Sabena.

FRENCH fraud squad officers smashed a $170 million bill-padding ring in Paris. The Serious Fraud Office in London is already working with the French on a parallel scandal, thought to involve oil trading and energy group ELF.

THE acquisition of UK money management firm Mercury Asset Management by Merrill Lynch for $5.2 billion has handed Mercury boss Carol Galley a $17 million windfall.

VOLKSWAGEN, Europe's largest car maker, is reported to be in talks to buy a stake in Volvo, the Swedish auto manufacturer. VW has already expressed an interest in buying Rolls-Royce Motors from British engineering group Vickers.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates November 24	Sterling rates November 17
Australia	2.4300-2.4412	2.4213-2.4256
Austria	20.65-20.69	20.64-20.66
Belgium	60.51-60.63	60.47-60.58
Canada	2.4035-2.4058	2.3916-2.3937
Denmark	11.17-11.18	11.16-11.17
France	9.82-9.83	9.82-9.83
Germany	2.9356-2.9384	2.9336-2.9357
Hong Kong	13.07-13.08	13.08-13.09
Ireland	1.1263-1.1286	1.1246-1.1271
Italy	2,877-2,881	2,872-2,875
Japan	214.32-214.62	212.79-213.02
Netherlands	3.3085-3.3115	3.3065-3.3095
New Zealand	2.7102-2.7140	2.6968-2.7009
Norway	11.93-11.94	11.96-11.97
Portugal	299.39-299.91	299.03-299.32
Spain	247.96-248.27	247.42-247.66
Sweden	12.79-12.81	12.76-12.78
Switzerland	2.3756-2.3780	2.3854-2.3879
USA	1.6920-1.6930	1.6925-1.6932
ECU	1.4810-1.4831	1.4817-1.4832

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To meet the challenges of this post you will have a minimum of three years' experience of development work overseas, proven management skills and first-hand knowledge of at least one of the programme areas above. An MA qualification and Middle East experience is also preferred.

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**For further details and application pack send a fax or write to Jean Mawer, Personnel Administrator, The Church Mission Society, Partnership House, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU.
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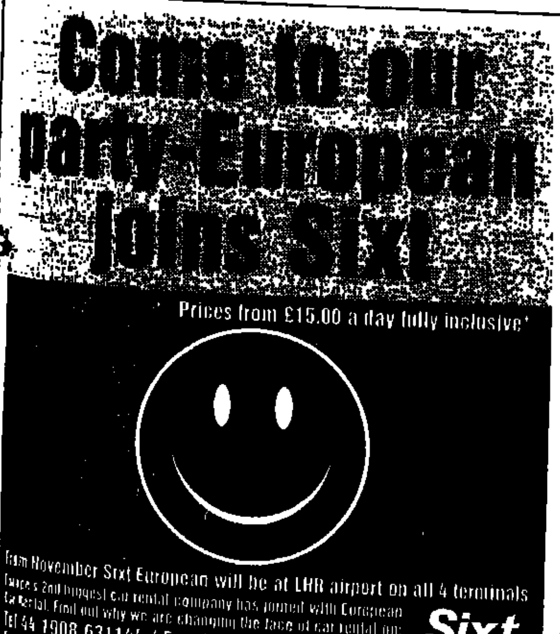
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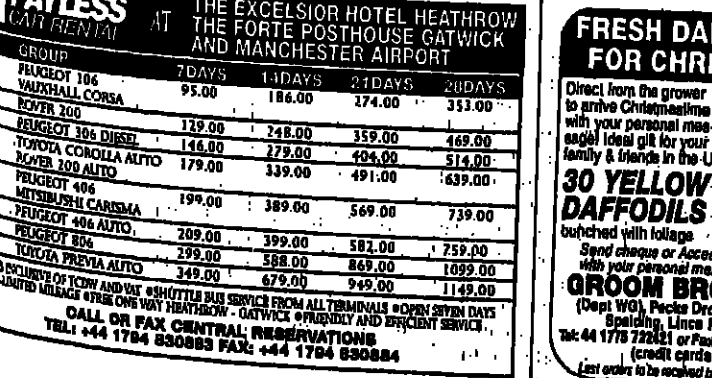




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Samantha Coleman and her sextuplet siblings: life hasn't been one long holiday for the British family since the novelty wore off

The septuplets born last week brought joy to Iowa, but doctors in Britain are not pleased. Why? Because of fertility drugs. **By Chris Mihill** and **Sarah Boseley**

When a miracle loses its shine

THE seven little McCaugheys would not have known, but they were making good-news headlines across the world last week: the second known set of septuplets ever born alive, and, if they live, the first to survive. Doctors at the Iowa Methodist Medical Centre, in Des Moines, talked of a miracle, and their father Kenny described "one of the most blessed events that I have ever encountered".

The news was not, however, received with such unqualified enthusiasm on the other side of the Atlantic. In Britain, fertility specialists and even charities for the infertile were raising serious questions about whether such a multiple pregnancy should have been allowed to happen. Far from being a triumph of medicine, many professionals were seeing the treatment of Bobbi McCaughey, the mother, as almost a medical disaster.

The 29-year-old seamstress from the small town of Carlisle, Iowa, may have had her seven babies, but many experts fear for their long-term survival. But even if the babies do live, they may still be mentally and physically handicapped. Some small-weight premature babies, as were these, who survive to adulthood have their lives dogged by ill health. And in the shorter term there is a strong risk of lung damage, infections, cerebral palsy, blindness, mental retardation and development problems with speech and coordination.

"It is a miracle this American couple have got healthy children out of it at 32 weeks, although there is still a high chance of something going wrong," Peter Brinsden, the medical director at the British clinic where the first test-tube baby was born in 1978, said last week. "I hope the outcome is happy, but I have to say it is not good medicine."

There are more multiple births now than there have ever been, for a simple reason: fertility drugs. Mrs McCaughey had been taking Metrodin, one of the most widely used fertility drugs, although others such as clomiphene and Pergonal are also common. The drugs work by stimulating the follicles in the ovary to produce extra eggs. A woman can produce 10 or more eggs in a month, rather than just one.

The drugs are based on naturally occurring hormones produced by the pituitary gland to stimulate the ovaries. For many years these have been derived from the urine of menopausal women, who produce large amounts of the chemicals at this time, because the ovaries are starting to fail and the body tries harder to stimulate them.

In many cases the urine is collected from nunneries; in recent years demand for the drugs has become so great that urine collection is a big industry in countries such as Spain, where tankers tour villages picking up specimen bottles and transporting them to processing factories. The newer drugs, however, are man-made versions, derived from DNA technology.

The drugs are used in three types of fertility treatment. They are given in low doses to women who naturally lack the hormones, and in higher doses to those attempting artificial insemination, to increase the chances of pregnancy. The highest doses are used in women undergoing in-vitro fertilisation (IVF). From up to 10 eggs in a monthly cycle, two or three embryos are implanted, and the rest frozen so that future attempts at pregnancy can use the embryos created at the same time. At the levels used for IVF, the drugs cost around £1,000 ($1,600) per treatment in Britain.

It would not be permitted to implant seven embryos in Britain. Legal controls set out by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority say that no more than three — and preferably no more than two — embryos should be implanted, in order to reduce the chances of multiple pregnancies. Despite this, the authority's latest annual report, published earlier this month, warned of the growing number of multiple births arising from IVF, with a third of IVF treatment now resulting in multiple pregnancies.

Yet even in Britain there are no legal controls governing the use of fertility drugs, and babies born as a result are not recorded centrally, as they are for IVF. We know that there have been 20,000 IVF births in Britain since 1978, when Steptoe and Edwards pioneering work at Bourn Hall in Cambridge resulted in the birth of Louise Brown.

The current medical director at Bourn Hall, Peter Brinsden, said last week that although the American septuplets had been delivered alive, the case raised worrying questions, as most large multiple pregnancies end in tragedy. "This is not so much a failure of medicine, because it achieved a pregnancy, but it is an unhappy outcome. The aim of fertility treatment should be to give couples one or two children at most. Treatment with fertility drugs needs to be monitored so carefully, and you must intervene if a woman if going to release seven or eight eggs. The aim should be for a maximum of two babies."

Once a multiple pregnancy had occurred, some couples would refuse to contemplate selective reduction because of religious views, but the chances of a miscarriage before 30 weeks were extremely high, Mr Brinsden said.

Tim Hedgley, chairman of Issue, the charity for people seeking fertility treatment, said it was important that patients listened to the advice of doctors, although doctors had no right to insist women underwent abortions if they experienced a multiple pregnancy.

"It is not good to carry seven babies. [Bobbi McCaughey] is very lucky to have got through it so far. We see a successful fertility treatment as a single live birth. Multiple births are fraught with difficulty."

Yet with an estimated one-in-six couples facing fertility problems, more than 2 million people in Britain need medical help in achieving the family they long for. "Infertility is as common as cancer and it is as real a problem," he said. "It can absolutely destroy people."

Then there is the stress multiple births cause for the parents. A mother alone can cope with twins, but with more, assistance is essential. Unless there are willing friends and relatives around, help costs money; and the more children in the house, the shorter money is going to be. Some fathers end up giving up their job to help with caring for the children, which means the family has another adult on hand but must cope on state support.

A mother in Northern Ireland who had quads in August 1996 gave the Twins and Multiple Births Association an idea of the costs: £24-£30 a week on nappies, £30 a week on baby food, £30 a week on milk powder, and £10 a week on toiletries. Bottles, steriliser, teats and dummies cost £120. Nursery equipment, including enough prams, car seats, baby seats and Moses baskets cost £2,500. Then, of course, they had to fork out for a larger five-bedroom house and a "people carrier" car.

For some, sponsorship has been one way out of the financial nightmare. Already Procter & Gamble has offered the McCaugheys free nappies for life. Identical ba[illegible] look good on posters and TV [illegible]mercials. But with quads and [illegible]quins, the sponsorship possib[illegible] are limited because there have b[illegible] so many of them.

We have moved beyond [illegible] 1930s, when the Dionne quint[illegible] in Canada became a freak s[illegible] The five identical baby girls [illegible] Annette, Cecile, Yvonne, Marie [illegible] Emilie — were taken away f[illegible] their parents by the Ontario gov[illegible]ment and placed in a hospital. [illegible] was nothing wrong with them [illegible] they were used as a happy s[illegible] relieve the misery of the Depre[illegible]

The best known such fact[illegible] Britain is probably the Walto[illegible] tuplets — six girls born in No[illegible]ber 1983. The parents welc[illegible] sponsorship deals and did [illegible] Unfortunately for other sext[illegible] — the Colemans and the Y[illegible] born in 1986 and 1993 respec[illegible] — the novelty has worn off [illegible] Vinces, in particular, have [illegible]plained of severe poverty.

Perhaps the McCaugheys [illegible] Iowa, starting life with their s[illegible]plets, are not facing the good [illegible] the world's media would like[illegible]

Research by Matt Keating

Making babies
How to stimulate a multiple birth

Fertility drugs such as Metrodin can induce ovulation in a woman, so it is used to improve the pregnancy rate in couples with some types of infertility.

One side effect is "superovulation": the production of multiple eggs. When fertility drugs alone are used, about 20 per cent of resulting pregnancies are multiple (mostly twin). When IVF is used too, the rate rises to about a quarter, including 1 per cent of four or more births. Multiple births resulting from the use of fertility drugs have a higher incidence of premature delivery and probably of miscarriage or still birth; and some studies show a higher incidence of tubal pregnancies, which can be dangerous. In rare cases other side effects include ovarian hyperstimulation, in which ovaries enlarge. Some studies link prolonged use of some drugs with ovarian cancer.

Ovary cross-section

Oocyte (egg)

Germinal epithelium the egg-production layer

Primary follicle

Fallopian tubes

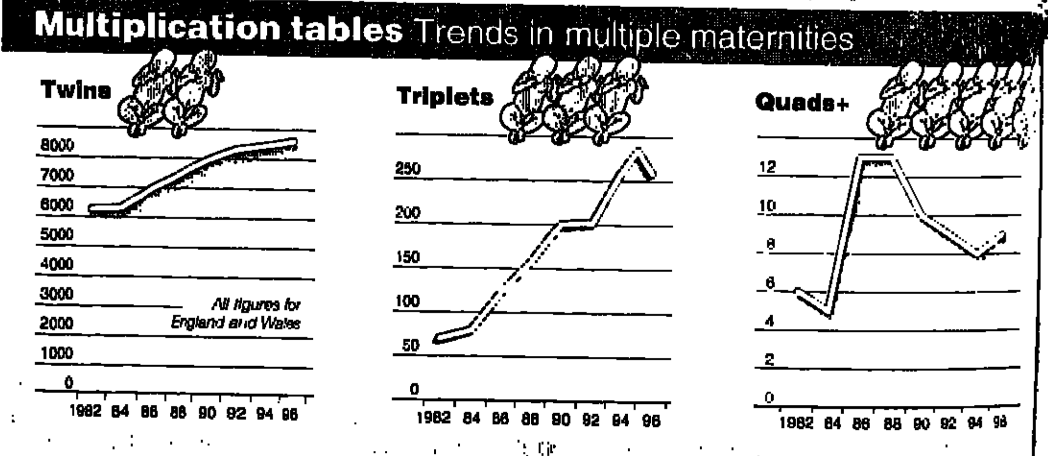
Ovary

Uterus

Vagina

1 Injection number 1
Metrodin, a gonadotrophin, contains the hormone FSH (follicle-stimulating hormone), which stimulates ovum production. The drug is usually given by injection on the second or third day of the monthly cycle, and then for between six and nine days.

2 Injection number 2
Blood tests and ultrasound examinations monitor the woman's response, and when the ovarian follicles reach the required size, and oestrogen levels are adequate, a separate hormone injection is used to trigger ovulation. Sexual intercourse or artificial insemination can be timed for this time.



Women of a certain age...

All multiple births by age of mother in England and Wales, rate per 1,000 maternities (1995)

35 · 30 · 25 · 20 · 15 · 10 · 5 · 0

>20 · 20-24 · 25-29 · 30-34 · 35-39 · 40-44 · 45+ · All

Age of mother

The risks of multiple birth

The Human Fertilisation a[nd] Embryology Authority says m[ultiple] births can lead to a much higher r[isk]:

- Complications during pregn[ancy]
- Premature birth and low birth [weight]
- Dea[th]
- Death of infants within 28 days of birth [for] triplets, 10 times that for single IVF bir[ths]
- If low birth weight, serious life-long he[alth] problems such as cerebral palsy (triplets averag[e] lb compared to 7.3 lb for single ba[bies])

ILLUSTRATION: PADDY ALLEN/MATT BUCK/GRAPHIC[S]

Letter from Japan Jane Norman

Death becomes him

ON A spring day you might have seen a happy family sitting under the cherry trees. The family consisted of three members, old Mrs Kuwabara, her son, and a photograph of her late husband, on a deckchair to itself. The photograph had been taken from its usual place on the Buddhist altar in Mrs Kuwabara's living room.

Mrs Kuwabara got on with her husband much better once he was dead. Every evening she summoned him with a gong to tell him about the day's events and ask him to intercede in the other world on the family's behalf. She put the family's increasing prosperity down to his efforts,

Old Kuwabara in life had no time for such nonsense with gongs. His grandfather had inherited a fortune which he squandered on ill-advised ventures and riotous living, leaving his family with nothing but their wits to live on. As a result old Kuwabara had grown up in grinding poverty. What did he have to thank his ancestors for? Nothing.

When the Buddhist priest came to the house to chant a sutra for the ancestors in front of the altar old Kuwabara went into the other room and turned up the volume of the baseball commentary to drown him out. His wife came to remonstrate, but he gave her a punch which sent her spinning through the sliding doors back to the priest's feet.

"Just a waste of money!" snarled old Kuwabara.

Since death can be regarded as a passage to a more enlightened state of being and attaining enlightenment means attaining buddhahood, a person automatically becomes a Buddha when he dies. Buddhism has therefore become confused in the minds of many with a form of ancestor worship, and Buddhist priests cash in on the confusion in order to earn a living.

Old Kuwabara died of a heart attack at the age of 68. Everybody in the family knew that he had sent his blood pressure soaring by eating red meat three times a day to maintain his stamina for his young mistress. The young woman turned up at the wake brandishing her rosary and accused Mrs Kuwabara of bullying her husband to death. Old Kuwabara's son and his widow's brother each took an arm and escorted the mistress out, trying not to snicker. All that red meat might have killed the old man in the end, but it seemed to have done the trick while he was alive. At least one mourner was sincere.

Old Kuwabara's son had done well. In his mid-40s, he already owned a chain of restaurants and played golf with some of Kyoto's prominent citizens. Among these was an undertaker who never let a close relative of a golfing partner pass unobtrusively into the next life if he could help it. The death of old Kuwabara was the sort of opportunity he relished.

A magnificent funeral, lasting three days from wake to cremation, was arranged. The queue of mourners, mainly young Kuwabara's business associates who had never set eyes on the old man, wound out of the temple garden and down the street. The mourners bowed in turn in front of the coffin, lit an incense stick and passed on to the exit where the undertaker's employees were handing out small white envelopes. Each envelope contained a card printed with reflections on the transience of life and a gift voucher for 1,000 yen ($7.80) from a Kyoto department store.

Finally the corpse was borne to the crematorium in a golden hearse. The gold was a costly extra which young Kuwabara was not in a position to refuse. The family shook their heads in amazement. The widow's brother expressed everybody's sentiments when he said, "I only wish the old rogue could have been here to see it!"

Once old Kuwabara had passed through the furnace there were still a few bones left among the ashes. Following the custom, each member of the family picked up a bone with a pair of chopsticks and deposited it in an urn. Old Mrs Kuwabara carried the urn home and placed it on the altar beside her husband's photograph and a piece of wood with his name on it.

The priest had awarded a name with two characters instead of the usual three, a compromise which he hoped the old man might appreciate. The posthumous name must reflect the dead person's individuality yet indicate that he has achieved a state of perfect wisdom and bliss. Old Kuwabara was now a Buddha.



From the ashes . . . St Georges Hall, Windsor Castle, after its restoration PHOTOGRAPH GRAHAM TURNER

A five-star Forte in oak and gilt

Maev Kennedy

WINDSOR CASTLE is open for business again, exactly five years after the bonfire which lit up the Berkshire sky and added to what the Queen dubbed her "annus horribilis".

Death and taxes were still to come as more horrible years followed, but the Queen's favourite home is immaculate again, six months ahead of schedule, under budget, and in time for her 50th wedding anniversary last week. "We obviously think it's quite good," Michael Peat, Keeper of the Privy Purse, said with understatement.

The fire started in the chapel, where the heat of a spotlight set too close to a curtain caused it to ignite. The flames spread and destroyed more than 100 rooms, including nine state rooms.

Dousing the fire took more than 15 hours for 250 firefighters from brigades all over London and the Home Counties.

The Queen stood watching, a hunched figure in raincoat and Wellingtons, in the courtyard as more than 1½ million gallons of water were pouring into the castle. The water did more damage than the fire itself.

Restoration cost £37 million, mostly paid for by a limited summer opening of Buckingham Palace to the public. The work required 75 miles of scaffolding. Fragments of scorched plaster and timber mouldings were gathered up in 2,000 bread baskets, while 7,000 dustbins carried away what could not be salvaged.

Of the thousands of priceless antiques and works of art, only one huge painting and one sideboard the size of a bus, both too big to remove, were entirely destroyed.

Some have criticised the traditional style of architecture adopted for those rooms that had to be entirely rebuilt, including the chapel, and the vast St George's Hall. One suggestion in Country Life was for a banqueting hall with a slot in the roof aligned on the Heathrow runway, so guests could admire planes overhead. Prince Philip reportedly ended the argument by saying the modern designs would look silly when matched with the Windors' furniture. He also contributed a scribbled pencil drawing for a stained glass window for the chapel, saying modestly it might not be good enough; diplomatically, the architects decided it was just the thing.

With their forest of new blonde oak, acres of new carpets and blaze of gilt, the restored chambers look "just like a five-star Forte, really", said one critic.



Flashback to the devastation wreaked by the fire in 1992

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

THE queuing time at petrol stations is minimised by roughly equal numbers of cars having their petrol tanks on the left and on the right. Is there some agreement between car manufacturers on this?

MOST car manufacturers place the petrol tank filler cap so that the petrol pump nozzle can reach it whether parked to the left or the right of the pump. This is done in collusion with the petrol station constructors, who make the petrol pump pipes both flexible and long enough. However, despite all this planning, queues of traffic often form next to the right-hand pumps, while the left-hand pump lanes are relatively free. — *Richard Wagon, Cambridge*

CARS historically have the petrol filler on the passenger side. For right-hand-drive-designed cars this puts the nozzle on the left, for LHD cars it is on the right. — *Matthew Guite, Staines, Surrey*

WHICH is more energy efficient — boiling water using an electric kettle, a kettle on a gas hob or a microwave oven?

THE kettle on a gas hob, because gas is a primary energy source. Electricity is generated by burning gas or coal in a power station at between 30 and 50 per cent efficiency. Heating by microwaves, generated from electricity, is even more inefficient. — *John Ackers, Islington Friends of the Earth, London*

WHAT'S the difference between a herb and a spice?

LESLIE KENNEDY is insufficiently explicit (November 2). Herb is a general botanical term meaning a green plant that contains no woody structures. Pungent spices come mainly from the warmer parts of America and Asia. The milder herbs are largely temperate in origin — ie, those most common in cooking. The inference, common in much writing, that spices come mainly (or wholly) from the Spice Islands (the Moluccas) is incorrect. H N Ridley's classic book, Spices [published 1912] describes some 15 spices. Only three originate in the Moluccas. — *Paul Holliday, Uppingham, Rutland*

IN A strict botanical sense, a herb is any plant which does not produce a woody stem. I have a botanical book published in 1937 which suggests a more colloquial definition, a herb is a non-woody plant from which a "drug" (essence, flavour) is obtained from the whole plant rather than from any particular plant part. — *(Dr) Jamie Day, CSIRO Tropical Agriculture, St Lucia, Queensland, Australia*

NOW, would the Herb Girls top the charts? — *Olav Lange, Heslington, York*

IN the classic 1940s Tom & Jerry cartoons there are several occasions in which Tom turns to camera and bellows in a mournful voice: "Don't you believe it!" What is its origin?

DURING this period the Americans were paranoid about an invasion by the Japanese. Authenticity was everything, hence all things foreign were checked and re-checked. This paranoia invaded the studios, resulting in the phrase. — *Stephen Calrow, Woolton, Merseyside*

The Weirdest Ever Notes & Queries, a collection of more than 200 of the strangest questions and answers, is now available in bookshops, price £8.99. Copies can also be ordered through a credit-card hotline on 01483-268 888 (plus £1.01 p&p).

Any answers?

IS THERE any truth in the story that eucalyptus trees can spontaneously combust? — *Stephen Chambers, London*

WHY are central-heating radiators invariably placed under windows. Surely the heat will escape through the glass? — *A Aitkenhead, Fenham, Tyne & Wear*

IS THERE a cure for morning sickness in early pregnancy? — *Fiona Brightman, Alberta, Canada*

WHERE will it all end? — *Daniel Morgan, Paris, France*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Unwanted: A Gypsy child rests at Calais awaiting deportation from Britain with 50 other Czechs in October; Milan Scuka (right) met a similar fate in Canada

PHOTOGRAPHS NEVILLE ELDER (ABOVE); JULIE DENESHA

Gypsy malady

Duncan Campbell and **Kate Connolly** report from Prague on the Czech Gypsies desperate to start a new life abroad

TWO WEEKS ago, blood was spilled in Dover as 50 members of the National Front — in town, they claimed, at the request of the local citizenry — marched in protest at the recent arrival of around 600 Gypsies from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Depending on your choice of newspaper, this has been an "invasion" (Daily Telegraph) or "flood" (Sunday Times) by "Giro Czechs" (Evening Standard) "looking for a hand-out" (Independent). The arrival, as we now know, was partially accelerated by a documentary shown on Czech television in September featuring a small group of Gypsies who had found what they initially saw as a better life in Britain.

On one level, it's tempting to see the reaction provoked by their arrival as the placing of a sign in the national window which reads "No Gypsies Allowed, By Appointment Only", but on another level it is much more epic. It's not much of an exaggeration to say it's also about the fall of communism, an unrecognised legacy of the Nazis, the relationship between east and west Europe, the place of people who are "other" in an increasingly homogenised society, the power of TV and the universal appeal of Mr Bean.

Which takes us, on a chill Sunday night, to Havlickovo Square in Prague 3, one of the main Gypsy parts of the city. Since the fifties, under communism, Gypsies were required to register and were, in a way, assimilated into the labour force and the educational and welfare system so that they no longer travelled in the traditional fashion — a change in their way of life with both benefits and disadvantages. Inevitably, most of the country's 200,000 to 300,000 Gypsies — out of 12 million worldwide and 8 million in Europe, mostly the east — have found themselves in the poorer quarters.

We are here with eight Gypsy teenagers, in many ways like any group of the same age from Shrewsbury to Santiago: some shy, some bold, in Adidas jackets and Nike hats, illicit Marlboros cupped in hand. They had seen the TV programmes, both the one about Dover and a similar one the previous month about Canada. So what did they think that life held for them in Britain? "Mr Bean!" says Jan, aged 15. They have a friend who does great Mr Bean imitations. "Grass lawns," Jan adds. Vladimir, aged 15, with his arm round Erika, aged 14, loves football, and English football is often on TV: "If I was to be a football player in England, people would cheer me on." And, of course, everyone knew of Princess Diana.

What emerges in the collective mind's eye is a magical land where the men make you laugh with their facial contortions, the women bestow princessly kindness and black football players are embraced by their white fans on manicured lawns. But had any of their relatives made the trip? Erika's aunt had gone to Dover. "The last we heard she was sleeping in a railway station."

They had watched events unfolding on the news after those first optimistic programmes. "First we saw the Canadians saying they did not want us as immigrants," says Petr, aged 15, the most outspoken of the group. "But they are all immigrants themselves — they took the land from the Indians." He admired those who had gone to Dover. At least it meant that people were having to realise what life was like for Gypsies in the Czech Republic, the lack of work, the poor education, the attacks by skinheads. Had any of them been attacked? "I always run away!" Jan laughs.

Running away was what 17-year-old Jitka Chanova was doing when she was attacked and taunted with racist slogans by a group of skinheads in Plzen, west Bohemia, in September 1993. She and her three friends jumped off the tram to escape. Jitka smashed her head against a steel pole and died of her injuries. One of her attackers, Filip Besta, aged 19, received a suspended sentence.

Jitka's half-Slovakian mother, Aranka, sitting in her spotless flat in the Vinica Project housing estate on the outskirts of Plzen, recalls how she heard of her daughter's death: "When it happened, the investigators [police] did not tell me about it — I found out from her friends. One of her attackers was a former classmate." She recounts the story with a sad weariness. Ironically, she had not liked Jitka mixing with Gypsies "but she had dark skin because of her father".

Also on the estate, Ivan Conka, aged 33, dressed in leather jacket and cowboy boots as pointed as his remarks about racism, says he would have liked to have gone to Britain too. "It's a tolerant country, without racial prejudice. Here we are frightened to send our children to school because of the skinheads. My girlfriend is Czech and her family condemn her for living with a Gypsy. Under communism, we had work and a much better life. We don't want communism back because we have freedom of expression now, but what does that mean? We go for a job and when you get there, and they see you, there's no job. Yes, we're noisier and more temperamental, but that's the way we were born. When I celebrate my birthday, I like to drink and sing, but the Czechs find that hard to deal with."

ARNOST KOTLAR, aged 34, is from Cesky Krumlov, a medieval town made prosperous through tourism, where Gypsies are said to be most integrated. He has his own bar but he agrees about job-hunting: "If you go for a job, you don't get past reception." He welcomes the fact that the government has made sympathetic noises following the controversy of the exodus but he is sceptical about it making any difference. "White people will not solve our problem, it has to be Romanies themselves."

One Plzen Gypsy who flew off to the mythical better life in Canada is Milan Scuka. He is back, sadder and poorer. Borrowing $1,800 from family and friends, he had flown to Toronto with his pregnant girlfriend, tired, he says, of racism and wanting his family to grow up in a different way. In the centre of the town best known in England for Pilsner Urquell beer, he is now busy painting the window frames on a bleak flat for his family.

"We had gone partly because of better living conditions but mainly because of the racial discrimination here, which people don't recognise." His grandfather had been in a concentration camp during the war, he says, "but I'm 25 and all we were taught at school was about the Jewish Holocaust, not about what happened to the Gypsies."

This is a common complaint: the world seems unaware of the 500,000 Gypsies who died in concentration camps in the second world war. Isabel Fonseca, in her book Bury Me Standing, says that as few as 600 Czech Gypsies survived the war. The others living there now arrived from Slovakia and further east. Gypsies would like a memorial at the site of one of the most notorious camps, at Lety in south Bohemia, but it is now a meat processing plant and the locals do not want it closed.

At first, Milan had thought that Canada would be the answer. "But the film did not show the red tape and all the customs officers. Would I try again? I am in debt now. I have been thinking about Australia but I think it's all over now. I couldn't take another deportation."

What did the other Czechs feel about the sudden spotlight? Vladimir Rubas, aged 45, who works at a technical college and lives on the same estate as Ivan and Aranka, says: "The Gypsies won't find a better life in England — they have no education and a bad attitude to work. Here they stay up late because they don't have to work, they drink and play music loud. They say we oppress them, but they oppress us with their noise. It's always been the same. My grandfather worked in the uranium mines in Pribram in the thirties, and the Gypsies, when they got their pay cheques, would live like lords for two or three days and spend it all and then have nothing left."

A perceived lack of sympathy for Gypsies is acknowledged by Stanislav Penc, is a young former dissident who runs the Documentation Centre for Human Rights in Prague, much like Searchlight in Britain. He suggests that in the last seven years there have been 1,1[illegible] racially and ideologically-motivated incidents, including an estimated [illegible] murders. One much-quoted estimate of Gypsy murders since 1989 is 28: the police claim the figure is less than half that.

Back in Prague, in the Sa[illegible]ton restaurant, Josef Kra[illegible]chvil is finishing his meal. He has just left the police after 25 years' service, the last two in charge of the unit that monitored extremist groups, particularly the skinheads who had targeted the Gypsies. "The whole world is talking about the Czechs being racist. So how do you account for the large number of Asians, Arabs, much more different than the Romanies, who have not been complaining? I can only find out if I am a racist if my son brings home a Gypsy girlfriend and says he wants to marry her. I can be a Utopian and say 'How nice', or I can be a racist and say 'That black bitch', or I can be a realist and say 'Think about it again — her brother did a long term in prison, her sister is a prostitute, her parents can't read or write'. If a Romany family heard this they would say I was racist but people are realists, they are drawing on their experience with Romanies.

"The police are blamed for not doing anything, but this is partly the fault of bad public relations, because the public don't know what we have done to counter extremism. Also the fall of the police state meant that some people understood freedom of expression differently."

Josef sympathises with Jitka's mother about the suspended sentence for the attacker but blames the judges. The effect of the TV programme, he thinks, will be beneficial: "The Gypsies will realise maybe the British skinheads are as tough as those in the Czech Republic, and people here will realise they have to study the problem more closely."

The TV programme maker, [illegible] Klima, is happy to discuss the role he has been given as a kind of televisual Moses leading the Gypsies to the

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promised land. A genial 46-year-old, he became interested in Gypsies in 1975, when he formed a romantic attachment to their language and to their music.

In 1994, Klima read in local newspapers about the first Gypsy exodus to Canada. He was puzzled that for the first time since 1989 people felt they wanted to leave and duly made a film about it last August. The reaction amazed him.

"It was like an earthquake," he says. "Thousands [of Gypsies] phoned up asking how they could leave. The Canadian government reacted and ended the visa agreement. It was like a nightmare." He found himself called the Gypsy King, hailed by the Gypsies for highlighting their plight but — to his consternation — also congratulated by rightwingers for precipitating their departure.

He had heard, too, of Gypsies going to Dover and travelled with a party on a bus there. The resulting short film followed the party across the Channel. Life appears rosy, with one Gypsy, Ladislav Scuka, talking about the choice of schools, the health care and his hopes to find work as a cook, as he lives on £140 ($240) a week for himself and his family. There is a friendly priest shown baptising Gypsy babies and a few rather frosty locals. Again the phones were ringing.

Klima says he "didn't want to be a travel agent. They were emigrating already; maybe we made it faster but that was all." He believes that the attention attracted by both the programme and its reputed effects will be to the benefit of the Gypsies. "But it's not simple, it's such a complicated question. There is a small proportion of real racists but mainly people are antagonistic to their style of life. There isn't antagonism towards the Vietnamese, because they work like bees from morning to night."

His next project is a programme based in Cesky Krumlov showing how there can be peaceful co-existence. Maybe he should show it to the people of Dover. As one women reported when she was collecting 3,000 signatures for a petition asking the Gypsies to go, only two people objected. "One was a man who asked if we had seen Schindler's List on TV the other night."

"I don't see the solution," Klima shrugs, "but I trust in Tao — the road is more important that the destination." Or, more mundanely, it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. A motto perhaps, for the Petrs and Jitkas and Janas who set off for Dover and, implicitly, for Gypsies for centuries.

CORRECTION

AN ARTICLE headlined "A city told to act its age" (November 2) contained two errors that gave a misleading impression of the architectural make-up of Bruges. The article, by Stephen Bates, was based on a new book, Bruges, The City Behind The History, by Roel Jacobs, parts of which were misread in compiling the Guardian Weekly's report. We should not have said, "there are only two medieval housefronts in the whole city", or given the impression that the Belfry was "a 19th century pastiche". It would have been correct to say, "two *wooden* medieval housefronts". Patrick Moenaert, the Burgomaster of Bruges, says, "It is true that not all the houses which are presumed medieval were really built in the Middle Ages. But hundreds of them were." Our apologies.

Transatlantic high flier

Barbara Cassini is the latest American woman to head up a UK company. **Julia Finch** reports

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST screamed a full-page newspaper ad last week. The beast in question is Robert Ayling, the boss of British Airways. The beauty is Barbara Cassani, the woman he has just promoted to launch a new cut-price airline. In the ruthless world of international air travel, BA is viewed as a corporate piranha and cheap no-frills competitors like easyJet, which placed the ad, fear Cassani's mission could be to force them out of business.

They have good reason to be worried. Cassani is just the latest in an increasingly long line of high-flying American women who have landed top jobs in British boardrooms. They have a reputation for being go-getting, have-it-all professionals who manage careers, homes, husbands and children with equal vigour. From Marjorie Scardino — the $715,000 a year "Texas Rose" who now heads Pearson, the media company — to the Bank of England's Iowa-born economist Deanne Julius, America's finest are thriving in British business.

Burberrys, that very English of brands, has just appointed Rose Marie Bravo as its new chief. Previously, Bravo was boss of the Saks Fifth Avenue store chain and Burberrys are reputed to be paying her $1.7 million a year. Another US retailer, Ann Iverson, previously of Bloomingdale's, was axed from Laura Ashley last week — but she made a total of $3.4 million for her efforts.

Their UK counterparts must wonder why these women are so special. Cassani says she has "no idea" why American women are making it to the top in UK corporations when so many British women still feel their sex prevents them getting that vital promotion. Indeed, she doesn't even consider herself especially American: "I have been an employee of British Airways for 10 years. I'm not an import. My passport may say I am, but I certainly don't feel like one." She has been surprised by the interest in her new appointment. Such a simple promotion, she says, would not have created such a stir in the US. Possibly it is because 10 per cent of top executive positions in the US's top 500 companies are now held by women, compared with only 5 per cent in the UK.



Cassini: spent her career hopping across the Atlantic PHOTO: DAVID SILLITOE

Cassani is 37 years old and has spent her career hopping back and forth across the Atlantic to ever bigger and better jobs. Born just outside Boston, she got a BA in International Relations from the Mount Holyoke College for women in Massachusetts and went on to do her Masters at Ivy League Princeton. After graduating, she worked as a management consultant in Washington DC. The job brought her to London in 1986. After just 12 months, however, she wanted more action. The opportunity came with British Airways. She joined when the company was privatised in 1987. At that point, she admits "being American was a positive attribute". The "world's favourite airline" wanted to be seen as an international organisation with a workforce to match.

Her first job with BA was in planning, but she moved to sales management and marketing, then was promoted to general manager of BA's Gatwick operation. In 1993, just after giving birth to her first child, she was appointed general manager of the airline's US operation, which has 2,000 employees, and was sent back to the US. Another baby followed in 1995, but within two years she was summoned back to the UK to head a secret project codenamed Blue Sky. It was the new, no-frills airline, which will put its first cheap-rate passengers in the air early next year.

She has never been aware, she insists, of sexist attitudes holding back her progress to the top. Neither, she says, does she suffer from Queen Bee Syndrome — the tag applied to female high-fliers accused of pulling up the drawbridge once they have made it to the top and not encouraging other women to follow in their footsteps. The last five months, she says, have been exhausting. With her family still based in the US, she has been commuting across the Atlantic in order to spend time with her children. They have now relocated to London, but probably see little more of their mother. Her days, she explains, start at 6am, when she eats breakfast with her English investment banker husband.

They leave the house before their children are awake. "We tiptoe out, so we don't wake them or the nanny, and I get to the office at 7.30am. Then I am running all day until I get home at about 7.30pm. Then I put the children to bed and usually do a little more work." Sometimes, however, she insists on making more time for her family. "I might just say I am leaving at 6pm. Then I can be home in time to get a whole hour or hour and a half with the kids before they go to bed." She does not, she says, crave more time with her children or suffer the guilt experienced by so many working mothers. "I never resent the job," she says.

One day, maybe, she might consider "doing a Brenda Barnes" — a reference to the $17 million-a-year president of Pepsi-Cola in the US who recently quit her job to spend more time with her family. Then she bursts into laughter. "I wouldn't get rid of the nanny, though!"

Dr Rhubarb's fab flab cure

Andrew Higgins in Shanghai

HER belly daubed with rhubarb paste, weighted with a bag of sand and attached to a flashing contraption by electrodes, Aida Jiang is one of China's fashion victims.

"I can't wear tight jeans any more. I feel like a gas balloon," she says. "I want people to think I'm only 20 when they see me from behind."

Though still a very trim 30, she fears that childbirth has spoiled her chances of looking like her idol Cindy Crawford and the other gossamer models featured in her favourite magazine, the Chinese-language edition of the glossy French fashion journal Elle.

Cursed for centuries by famine, China is now fighting fat. Leading the charge is Jiao Donghai, doctor, rhubarb researcher and guru of tummy trimming. He runs Shanghai's premier fat farm in a ward of the Xiangshan Chinese Medical Hospital, an underfunded state clinic with a lucrative side-line in slimming potions and sweat-free exercise.

"In the past we could not even get enough to eat," he says. "Now people are getting fatter and fatter. We are nearly as fat as the Americans."

A survey he helped conduct discovered more than 70 million overweight Chinese. China's "little emperors", the spoilt product of the one-child policy, are particularly prone to flab.

Schooled in both Western and Chinese medicine, Dr Jiao first made his name treating obesity, gastric bleeding and other maladies with rhubarb-based concoctions. An academic press published a collection of his research papers. But now he increasingly caters to China's new narcissism.

Shanghai, the first city to banish Mao's blue boiler-suit, takes its appearance very seriously. Home to a galaxy of models and movie stars, it inherits a tradition of high-fashion glitz and cosmopolitan vanity.

"I'm not fat but I want to look better," Ms Jiang says, lying motionless as the pulsing electrodes of a Multipurpose Passive Exerciser silently massage her stomach.

Before connecting the machine, a nurse rubbed her stomach with rhubarb unguent, a beauty balm first used by the Empress Dowager.

Dr Jiao claims to have improved the formula, using only carefully selected rhubarb roots — very different from the variety used to make crumble — from China's far west.

Ms Jiang shuns exercise as unhealthy. "Run? Where can you run around here? Even at six in the morning the air is dirty." Swimming, she says, is even more hazardous: public pools are grubby and those in hotels used by foreigners are riddled with the Aids-related virus. But she worships foreign fashion.

The treatment room, crammed with narrow wooden pallets on a concrete floor, is more like a military field hospital than a beauty salon. It stinks of ammonia, cabbage and stale cigarette smoke. But all the beds are taken. None of the "patients" — all women — looks fat.

The slimming ward's star patient is Geng Anda, aged 18, who although under 5ft (1.52m) used to weigh 153kg. After months on the ward, he has lost more than half the weight. Pills and rhubarb massage helped cut his flab and curb his appetite.

His bulk branded him as handicapped, a stigma in China where schools are often closed to all but able-bodied children. As a result, he is illiterate.

"Being overweight can hurt more than your looks," says Dr Jiao.

The doctor is a member member of the Communist Party. Most prized though is his nickname — Professor Rhubarb — a tribute to his vast knowledge of the varieties and properties of his favourite ingredient.

He insists that it is not only the wealthy who benefit from his work. Women laid off by Shanghai's troubled textile factories also come to him. "They have to look pretty to get new jobs. The prettier you are, the easier it is to find work."

Family that plays together

Theatre de Complicite has changed British culture beyond all recognition. Now it's taking on the world.
Lyn Gardner reports

JOHN BERGER **believes it is the most creative and important theatrical force in Europe.** Jonathan Miller says it has strongly influenced his work. Frank McGuinness argues it is one of the world's great theatre ensembles, and when he was artistic director of the Royal National Theatre, Richard Eyre couldn't get enough of it.

Theatre de Complicite has come a long way since 1983, when Simon McBurney joined forces with Cambridge contemporary Annabel Arden and Jacques Lecoq graduates Marcello Magni and Fiona Gordon to produce a one-off show about the English seaside. (Before then, McBurney 's main claim to fame was to have kept an audience enthralled for 15 minutes on the opening night of The Comedy Store merely by peeling an orange while Emma Thompson provided off-stage sound effects.)

Put On Your Head consisted of the cast sitting in deckchairs for 90 minutes, eating ice creams and pretending a bucket of water was the sea and splodges of yoghurt on the stage came from passing seagulls. Fifteen years on, this raggle-taggle group of performers, designers, writers and other collaborators, who come together like nomads, perform, part and come together again, are the most influential company working in Britain.

It is an influence that spreads far beyond their own brilliant, idiosyncratic shows. This year alone, Complicite will have played the National Theatre with The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and London's Royal Court theatre with a revival of Ionesco's The Chairs (which opened last week), as well as done its first radio production, an adaptation of John Berger's novel To The Wedding.

And while the company's reputation increasingly attracts mainstream actors such as Juliet Stevenson, who played Grusha in The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and Geraldine McEwan and Richard Briers, who star in The Chairs, its tentacles spread even further through the associate artists and long-time collaborators who take a little piece of Complicite with them wherever they go.

There seems no earthly reason why Complicite should not take over the world. Joseph Seelig, co-director of the London Mime Festival, who also programmes several foreign festivals, once told me there are only two British companies that people abroad really want to see — the Royal Shakespeare Company and Theatre de Complicite.

The RSC has five permanent theatres and a subsidy of millions; Complicite has no building and has just been refused an Arts For Everyone Lottery grant to extend its educational work. Yet, like lots of people, I know which I'd rather see. I have always thought of Theatre de Complicite as *my* theatre company. So have hundreds of thousands of others. Even the name suggests performers and audience are somehow in cahoots.

Complicite is one of the main reasons I've never put in the time and effort to find out exactly how the video works. At the fag-end of the 20th century, when the live medium has seemed less and less relevant, when young playwrights trot out dramas that would be better suited to TV, and physical and visual theatre companies try to pretend they are making movies, it has been Complicite that has made it worth the bother of going to the theatre.

If I shut my eyes and conjure theatre images from the past 15 years, so many come from Complicite: Kathryn Hunter stalking the stage like an exotic deadly insect in The Visit, Annabel Arden fighting seduction and raspberry sponge in Anything For A Quiet Life, or Lilo Bauer's peasant born of her own grave in The Three Lives Of Lucie Cabrol, to name just three.

Complicite actors are the only ones I've ever seen play pigs and cows without making me think of a Joyce Grenfell voice saying, "Now then, children, let's all pretend to be hoppy bunnies." They have always combined virtuoso technique with a sense of humour, laughter with an impending sense of doom, cruelty with compassion.

Complicite even looks different from other companies — exotic, foreign, even ugly, as reviewers of the early work couldn't resist pointing out. It disrupts the spectacle of British theatre, with its English roses and well-ordered texts. Complicite has always embraced a kind of otherness, whether it is Marcello Magni's Italian-accented Shakespeare, Kathryn Hunter's limp or Tim Barlow's deafness. It is attracted to the marginalised and the dispossessed, and takes them into the centre: the writings of the Polish Jew Bruno Schulz, snuffed out by the Holocaust, in The Street Of Crocodiles, say, or the surreal, lunatic vision of Stalinist Russia in Out Of A House Walked A Man, devised from the writings of Daniil Kharms, who starved to death in a prison hospital in 1942.

What is interesting about Complicite's work, I believe, is that the further it has been from the mainstream, the more the mainstream has embraced it. It was The Street Of Crocodiles and Lucie Cabrol that took Complicite into London's West End. Annabel Arden takes a slightly different view. "My perception and Simon McBurney's has always been that we are in the mainstream of theatrical tradition. People tend to think of us as coming from the outside, but we think we are what theatre is."

IT IS this kind of certainty that has sustained the company long beyond the lifespan of most theatre groups. That and the singular vision of McBurney, who since 1992 has been the company's sole artistic director. Many Complicite associates say that McBurney is Complicite.

The epitaphs most commonly bandied around about McBurney are "genius", "precious", "wizard", "highly strung", "visionary" and "controlling". Like many brilliant artists, he is an obsessive. "Simon doesn't direct," says Marcello Magni. "He cooks. He'll still be working on a show, trying to get it right even on its last performance."

Yet it is this sense of being a family — and, like all families, looking out for each other and occasionally suffering turmoil and conflict — that has distinguished Complicite from so many other companies. Like all close families, its members may fall out but the unit exerts an irresistible tug. "You feel part of something much more than just a theatre company," says lighting designer Paule Constable. "You make the sacrifice to work for them because it isn't just a job where you arrive at the last minute and turn the lights on and off. You are integral." But, he adds, "it is quite an aggressive environment — not in the sense that people get angry but that so many ideas are generated, used and thrown away. It is incredibly demanding, and I can see why some people find it terrifying."

"If theatre is about community, I think we consciously grasped at that idea from the very earliest days," says McBurney. "It is the people who have been the bricks and mortar." The company, which dissected the grotesqueries of family life in one of its earliest shows, Please Please Please, has discovered that the family that plays together stays together. In the early days, company members even lived together. The thing that characterises Complicite shows and the Complicite process is the sense of play.

Annie Castledine, who has worked extensively with the company, says: "It is intoxicating. They are intensely childlike. There is nothing cynical about them at all. There is a rare integrity and a total obsession."

"We have been bound to each other because the shared understanding really is shared," says Arden. "We've always had an interest in the expressive power of the body, and we were always alive to the idea of the origins of theatre as a basic need to sing, dance, celebrate and consecrate. You may suffer, but you are also involved."

Yet there has always been a misconception that Complicite was just another physical theatre company and that all the members did was run around. Hence the outrage from some critics when Complicite tackled Shakespeare in Arden and Castledine's production of The Winter's Tale in 1992. Some were taken aback by what they thought of as a mime company finding its voice.

Hence also the readiness of journalists and critics — me included — to use terms such as "Complicite-like" to describe any company whose members have studied with Jacques Lecoq or Philippe Gaulier and show an ability to act with more than just their heads. There was a terrible temptation to confuse technique and intention.

But the truth is, we have never been entirely successful in pinning down exactly what a Complicite production is. Not only are they different from everybody else's but also vastly different from each other.

If the company has been on an epic journey, it has taken its audience with it. Back in 1984 I cried with laughter at A Minute Too Late, the smash-hit show about death. If you had told me then that, 13 years later, I'd be seeing the same company perform Brecht at the National, I'd have thought it was a joke. But there I was, earlier this year, laughing and crying again at this unique, crazy group of individuals who make up this most transforming of companies.

"What is Theatre de Complicite?" asked a friend who recently arrived from Peru. "It is", I replied, "the reason I go to the theatre."



Early days . . . Jos Houben, Simon McBurney and Marcello Magni in Complicite's A Minute Too Late (1988)

Passport to celebrity

MUSICAL
Michael Billington

RARELY **have I heard such drum-beating as prefaced the opening of Chicago at London's Adelphi theatre. But, even if it is not the greatest musical ever, it is a highly intelligent, expertly choreographed revival of the 1975 Kander and Ebb show that, in Walter Bobbie's production, suggests Brecht has finally reached Broadway.**

The show tells a simple story. Roxie Hart, a humble garage mechanic's wife, shoots her lover and comes to realise that, in the Chicago of the 1920s, murder is a passport to celebrity. Finding that fame is fleeting, however, she fakes prison pregnancy, treats her trial as if it were a giant audition and achieves the showbiz acclaim she desires.

Sondheim handles the same theme much more sharply in Assassins; the notion that in America murder not only brings notoriety but almost validates your existence. But, even if Chicago is not quite as tough as it pretends, it boasts a wealth of good tunes and presents murder as a vaudevillian spectacle — a point avidly seized on in this production, where the band is centre stage, the cast watch the action on surrounding chairs and the numbers are introduced as if they were separate turns.

Bobbie's production highlights the story's self-conscious theatricality. But what gives it real distinction is Ann Reinking's choreography "in the style of Bob Fosse". All the Fosse elements are there: the tip-tilted bowler hats, the emphasis on crotch and bottom, the floor-level glides and slides, the truck driver sexuality.a

The performances are also good. Ruthie Henshall captures Roxie's murderous opportunism — growling seductively, after a particularly butch display by the male chorus, "These are my boys." Goodman brings his usual fiery sharpness to the role of Roxie's self-seeking lawyer. And Nigel Planer, donning white gloves for his big number, makes the lugubrious anonymity of Roxie's husband very funny. Only Ute Lemper, for all her cartwheels and high kicks, seems to lack the inherent showbiz vulgarity of Roxie's jealous fellow-killer.

This is, however, a highly skilled Broadway import. And one can point to numerous excellent details — the shock when a rope crashes to the ground, reminding us that a Hungarian suspect, vainly protesting her innocence, has actually been hanged; or the false glitter of Razzle Dazzle, suggesting that American life is a series of illusions, which ends with the audience momentarily blinded by a descending lighting-bar.

Chicago does everything professionalism can do. But there was only one moment — when the band, under Gareth Valentine's direction, struck up a wild, jazzy version of Mr Cellophane — that I felt the kind of pure rhapsodic ecstasy the musical alone can provide.

War in the streets

CINEMA
Richard Williams

THE FIRST question levelled at a film like **Welcome to Sarajevo** is always the same: does it tell the truth? There's no conclusive answer. Try getting two witnesses to describe the same minor traffic accident if you want to know how hard it is to gather congruent testimony. No surprise, then, given the big and troublesome subject of Michael Winterbottom's film, that its release has been prefaced by a chorus of dissonant opinions.

From the genuine double-dyed war correspondent to the kind of hack who straps on a flak jacket before powering up the PC at home in Islington, each observer-participant presents a different view. This is the "angle" that journalists are supposed to have, but it reminds us that those who take up an option to get close to a war, in a professional capacity, have a very different kind of personal investment from those who have no choice. Journalists who cover wars are defined by it for the rest of their lives; the victims just try to forget.

So, like Under Fire or Salvador, Welcome To Sarajevo turns out to be largely a film about journalism and journalists in time of war. This makes sense of the decision to launch it with a resounding cliché, black-and-white newsreel footage of a devastated street bleeding into colour as the mechanism of a feature film takes over. Like most of the director's cinematic devices, it reinforces the message that there is nothing new about the horror of war, or about the task of describing it.

There can hardly be anyone still left unaware that this film is a fictionalised treatment of the book in which Michael Nicholson, the ITN reporter, described how in 1992, at the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo, he took a nine-year-old girl out of the city to live with his family in England. Nicholson's decision was a difficult but an honourable one.

The central role, renamed Michael Henderson, is given to the lean, self-contained Stephen Dillane. An experienced stage and TV actor, Dillane deserves to make his reputation with this intelligent depiction of the reporter's dilemma when faced by a situation to which, for once, he can make a real difference. Dillane modulates Henderson's reactions perfectly between communications with the normality of his family in a London suburb and the immersion in the apocalypse that has become his daily life.

But Henderson is not a charismatic figure, even among his network colleagues; there are hints that his producer (Kerry Fox) and cameraman (James Nesbitt) see his natural scrupulousness as a bit stuffy. It also finds a dramatic contrast in the brash grandstanding of Flynn (Woody Harrelson), a US network correspondent who marches down the middle of Snipers' Alley like John Wayne.

In one of the most harrowing episodes, a Chetnik warlord removes Serb children from the bus on which a charity worker (the excellent Marisa Tomei) is taking them out of the country, narrowly missing Emira (Emira Nusevic), the girl Henderson is smuggling away. The sequence in which another Serb uses his pistol to execute a dozen Muslim men has the jolting bluntness of real death.

This is not a "balanced" film. Winterbottom and his scenarist, Frank Cottrell Boyce, are not much interested in dealing with the political complexities, beyond Flynn's wry comment on US policy: "I can't help feeling that if it were Muslims slaughtering Christians, we'd have done something by now." But the complexities aren't the point. We're interested in the eternal simplicities, such as the sight of the Bosnian national library in flames, taking a people's history with it. Only an irrelevant soundtrack — Blur, Happy Mondays, Teenage Fanclub — and a saccharine depiction of the reporter's family diminish the film's authority.

Serious and affecting, its integrity beyond dispute, Welcome To Sarajevo is certainly recommended. But its earnestness prompts what may seem to be an unkind final question: what use is it? The events took place five years ago. The immediate crisis is over, the reality at a safe distance. The horror is elsewhere; and who is bearing witness to that?

Any view of **Seven Days in Tibet**, the story of the Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer and the journey that led him to a friendship with the young Dalai Lama, has already been tainted by research into his involvement in National Socialism. As a serious proposition, it collapses the moment Brad Pitt opens his mouth.

Whoever persuaded the director, Jean-Jacques Annaud, of the wisdom of having the actor speak in a heavy accent should be made to climb Nanga Parbat without oxygen (which Harrer didn't have) or a hairdresser (which Pitt certainly did, to judge by the consistent condition of his bottle-blond mop). It might be possible to dismiss the problem as just a product of poor technique were the script itself not so clunky.

Annaud is to be congratulated, however, on the sweep and beauty of the landscapes, brilliantly rendered by the camera of Robert Fraisse: visions of the Potala, the great temple at Lhasa, of monks in saffron and mulberry robes winding their way up the scree, of prayer wheels spinning and kites flying in the clear Himalayan air.



Under fire . . . Stephen Dillane (left) and James Nesbitt in Welcome To Sarajevo PHOTO: LAURIE SPARHAM

It's not over till the fat knight sings

OPERA
Tim Ashley

ENGLISH National Opera's new Falstaff, following on from its musically thrilling if dramatically flawed versions of The Flying Dutchman and The House Of The Dead, marks a further upward swing in the company's emergence from its recent aesthetic doldrums. It's not, it should be said, perfect. Matthew Warchus's production has its irritating features. The cast, despite tangible enthusiasm, is uneven. That it succeeds is largely due to the conductor, Oliver von Dohnanyi, who, in a stunning debut, sweeps you away with his galvanic energy from beginning to end, keeps the score's wonderful, if tricky, balance between exuberance and poignancy in perfect check, and [illegible] playing of heart-stopping [illegible] from the ENO orchestra.

His Falstaff, Alan Opie, sadly isn't quite in the same league. He acts beautifully, preens, struts and waddles like a duck fluffing its plumage, is very funny and — in the final scenes when the Merry Wives' jokes go too far — vulnerable and touching. His voice, however, fails to dominate. The sound is comparatively small and suggests the tiredness of age rather than the fat knight's unbreakable vitality.

There are slips elsewhere, too. Catherine Wyn-Rogers's Quickly is too young, and her voice, though beautiful, isn't fruity enough. Verdi intended Ford to be a serious, disruptive figure in his comic, reconciliatory universe. Keith Latham reveals a blazing baritone of considerable power, but his jealous violence fails to alarm. On the positive side, Rita Cullis, in gorgeous voice as Alice, turns in as fine a performance as any you will hear in the role. There's a rapturous, exquisite Nanetta from Mary Plazas, ideally matched by Charles Workman's handsome, gangling Fenton, who breathes the lines of his sonnet with tremulously excited anticipation.

Warchus's production, unveiled at Opera North earlier this year and now at the London Coliseum, has a traditionalism that would have been well nigh unthinkable at ENO during its Powerhouse years of goosy theatrical symbolism. He sets it in the middle of winter and has the characters scuttling in the half-light through Windsor's deserted, snow-swept streets before reconciling them in a birch forest that suggests the muted tragicomedy of Chekhov.

Warchus's handling of the cast is frequently brilliant, though the whole suffers from a lack of what the film world would call continuity. In the middle of winter, the Merry Wives sit indoors in flimsy-looking frocks with the windows wide open and arrange fresh flowers in vases.

Alan Opie as Falstaff: his voice doesn't match his size
PHOTO: DAVID SILLITOE

Everything to excess

OBITUARY
Michael Hutchence

MICHAEL HUTCHENCE, who has died aged 37, lived the part of archetypal rock star. His good looks and stage presence as lead singer of the Australian group INXS led to comparisons with Jim Morrison of the Doors and Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones. As for the band, they became the most successful rockers out of Australia.

The son of a wealthy champagne importer, Hutchence was born in Sydney but spent his early years in Hong Kong and Los Angeles, where he moved with his mother after his parents separated. At 13, Hutchence returned to Sydney, where he met his future songwriting partner, Andrew Farriss, at high school.

Andrew and his brothers, Jon and Tim, were already proficient musicians when they formed the Farriss Brothers in 1977 with 17-year-old Hutchence as the principal vocalist. Isolated from the mid-1970s punk rock explosions of London and New York, the group put together a style which, as Andrew Farriss later recalled, was not delineated as rock, soul, pop or funk.

In 1979, they were renamed INXS — "in excess". Performances on Sydney's pub rock scene developed their audience.. By 1981 they had played almost 300 concerts on their Fear and Loathing and Campus tours and, the group developed a national reputation.

The first INXS hit was Just Keep Walking (1981). Within a year their records were automatic Australian hits.

In 1983, INXS made their first US appearances on a tour with the Kinks. With photogenic Hutchence to the fore, a string of arresting promotional videos — beginning with The One Thing — were central to the success of INXS.

The international status of INXS was further boosted by the group's participation in the 1985 Australian Live Aid concert. The music media accorded rock god status to Hutchence, and in 1986 he played a drug-crazed punk in the Australian film Dogs In Space, directed by Richard Lowenstein. Hutchence's only other starring role was as the poet Shelley in Roger Corman's 1989 film Frankenstein Unbound.

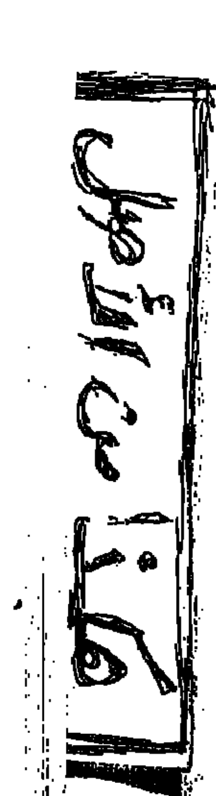
INXS peaked artistically in the late 1980s with the albums Kick and X. Kick sold nine million and the rock ballad Need You Tonight was an American number one.

By 1993 the group appeared to be looking for a new direction with the Full Moon, Dirty Hearts album.

Since 1990 Hutchence had based himself in London. His apparent adherence to a sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll lifestyle made him a tabloid favourite, particularly through his relationships with singer Kylie Minogue, model Helena Christensen and Paula Yates, with whom he had a daughter.

Dave Laing

Michael Hutchence, singer, born January 20, 1960; died November 22, 1997



Crime

Lucretia Stewart

Unnatural Exposure, by Patricia Cornwell (Little, Brown, £16.99)

PATRICIA CORNWELL is, on her day, simply the best, but few writers benefit from producing a book a year. This year Cornwell has produced two, a disastrous "lighter entertainment" called Hornet's Nest, and Unnatural Exposure, a "vintage Scarpetta". Scarpetta is a model heroine: intelligent, cool, compassionate, no longer young and therefore wise. But I feel increasingly sorry for her as she gets embroiled in one far-fetched case after another. Last time it was the New Zionists and the "Book of Hand"; now the poor woman is stuck in Dublin wondering whether five Irish bodies have anything to do with four back home in Virginia.

Still Water, by John Harvey (Heinemann, £15.99)

HARVEY also seems compelled to produce a book a year, but Charlie Resnick, his jazz and cat-loving detective, is such a sweetheart that, even when the plot is a bit woolly, it is a pleasure to be in his company. Resnick has got a new girlfriend, Hannah, who is a teacher, and they are trying to define the parameters of their relationship. Harvey's strong point has always been the nuances of relationships, the delicate balance of power. The plot is simply a device. What makes people tick is what interests Harvey.

Bordersnakes, by James Crumley (Collins, £15.99)

I LOVED this slow, rambling story about one man's attempt to recover his father's inheritance and another's to get vengeance on someone who used him for target practice and left him a broken man. Both have, in Crumley's elegant phrase, "a hard-on for retribution". Milo Milodragovitch and C W Sughrue team up in a cocaine-fuelled enterprise which proves absolutely that Crumley's Texas is the place to be.

The Dead Celeb, by Lindsay Maracotta (Hodder, £16.99)

WITTY Hollywood send-up masquerading as a mystery. Lucy Freers, wife of Kit Freers, Tinseltown's hottest producer, is a part-time sleuth. When Jeremy Lord, director of her husband's latest film, is found dead, Lucy steps in to discover whodunit.



The Silent Highwayman . . . your money or your life. Punch cartoon, July 10, 1858. From Plague, Pox And Pestilence: Disease In History, edited by Kenneth F Kiple (Weidenfield & Nicolson, £25)

When an ill wind blows . . .

Tim Radford

The Greatest Benefit to Mankind:
A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present
by Roy Porter
HarperCollins 831pp £24.99

DISEASE shaped us, and medicine too, sometimes literally. Back in Rennissance Italy, they knew about nose jobs. With syphilis rearranging, so to speak, the face of Europe, there was a ready market for rhinoplasty. Gaspare Tagliacozze set down in 1597 the instructions for a nose graft. A flap of skin from the upper arm was shaped and sewn to the remains of the patient's nose. After 14 days, the skin would have "taken" and could be severed from its old home and a series of reconstruction operations could begin. Until then, of course, the patient wandered around with his arm sewn to his nose.

This operation took place during the birth of modern science, based on direct observation and experiment rather than old manuscripts and older nostrums. William Harvey was about to demonstrate the circulation of the blood. Gabriele Falloppia — he of the tubes — claimed to have studied the genitals of 10,000 syphilitics. Bartolomeo Eustachio — he of the other tubes — specialised in the kidney and the venous system as well as the ear. The medical profession was gaining in clout, but patients went on losing their lives — business as usual.

Roy Porter is a historian of medicine, and of London, and of madness. The Greatest Benefit is a marvellous canter through 10,000 years of disease, diagnosis and death, and a reminder that — until surprisingly late this century — there was never much that doctors could do, and many of them realised it. They, like their patients, believed in humours, devils and miasmas, in plagues as the wrath of God, supernatural forces and signs of the zodiac. But every now and then they got it right.

In China, there was an elaborate, ancient and apparently unchanging medicine based on yin and yang, and concepts like *shen* for spirit and *qi* for vital vapours. But in the 17th century, Chinese physicians also decided on the existence of pathogenic *qi*, which entered the body through mouth and nose or could be communicated by contact, for instance smallpox, or tuberculosis.

This was one up on Western medicine then. The Ayurvedic tradition of India recommended treatments with snake-dung and sparrow eggs, goat-fat and elephant's urine, but in the 18th century two British surgeons saw an operation on a bullock-cart driver who had had his nose cut off for adultery. The rhinoplasty, performed by a Hindu brickmaker, was so superior that it was imported to Europe and called the "Hindu method".

Ancient Egypt had its own version of Harley Street: Herodotus first observed in the 5th century BC that there were consultants and specialists in eye disorders, the head, teeth and bowels. One bore the title Keeper of the Royal Rectum.

There has lately been an epidemic of books about disease: Porter's approach is different but he too underlines the symbiosis of humans and the things that sicken them. The process is as old as evolution itself, but it took a different turn when neolithic people went in for agriculture and started settlements. The infections have on occasion — syphilis, the Black Death, measles in the Americas — practically wiped out their hosts; the infections have had to learn to soften their virulence, and live with humans rather than die with them.

Haphazardly, physicians learnt to control disease, even though they did not understand it. In 1349, during the Black Death, the Florentines killed all the cats and dogs. At the time nobody understood that plague was spread by rats: 60 per cent of the city died. The Venetians banned the sick from entering the city, but the Milanese sealed the infected in their own houses and left them to die. This worked best, keeping the death rate to a mere 15 per cent. The people of Basel, Strasbourg and Mainz burned the Jews.

Syphilis erupted in 1494: it was variously called the disease of Naples, the French pox, the Spanish disease, the Polish disease, the Russian disease and even (in Turkey) the Christian disease. Captain Cook ruefully reported: Tahitians knew it as *Apa no Britannia*.

More than half the book deals with turning the tide in the struggle against misery and death. This is mostly a story of dead white European males of the past two centuries: of Jenner, Lister, Pasteur, Robert Koch; of the grip that European and American authorities took on public health and hygiene; the coming of antibiotics; and of the seeming triumph in the scientific battle against infection.

Porter is interested in the "endless dialectic" of popular and educated medicine. Antibiotics (on the whole) have worked better than shaman's herbs, but witchdoctors knew a thing or two. The pharmacists' researchers now visit the villages, noting the health remedies, looking for powerful new agents.

Science may have eliminated infections, but not the fantasy of health. Medicine itself is [illegible], he says: is it now merely a service industry, to provide designer bodies for the vain, and then to provide longer lives? There is a dying fall to this epic adventure, but anyone who feels nostalgia for a simpler past should turn back to page 3[illegible], Fanny Burney's eye-witness account on a mastectomy (hers) in 1811 before anaesthetic, and understand why Dr Johnson thought the medical profession "the greatest benefit to mankind".

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £22 contact CultureShop (see page 29)

Higher lunacy from the Upper House

John Mortimer

The House of Lords
by John Wells
Hodder & Stoughton 298pp £20

AT FIRST sight it might seem unlikely that the co-author, with Richard Ingrams, of Mrs Wilson's Diary and the Dear Bill letters should write a brilliantly informative and hilarious history of the House of Lords. However this is what, in a happy moment, John Wells decided to do.

And yet it may not be so extraordinary. Mary Wilson and Denis Thatcher are both British icons, almost completely without power, laughed about and yet somehow revered as institutions we couldn't do without. The House of Lords, whose existence is often regarded, as in this highly enjoyable book, as some kind of constitutional joke, has proved similarly indestructible. After the Liberal landslide of 1906, Lloyd George said that "An aristocracy is like cheese, the older it is the higher it becomes" and that the new government was "moving up its artillery into position for making an attack on the House of Lords". Asquith, the Liberal leader, said, "This ancient and picturesque structure has been condemned by its own inmates as unsafe." The House of Lords survived intact for the next 91 years and will, no doubt, emerge relatively unscathed from reforms after the Labour landslide.

John Wells traces the concept of Lordship from a likable Saxon Lord Byrhtnoth, who was such a gent that he allowed the invading Danes to disembark safely before joining battle with them — as a result his troops were defeated and he was decapitated — to Lord Milford, a hereditary peer and a communist, who invited the Upper House to abolish themselves and allow the workers to take over running the economy. To his surprise none of their Lordships bought him a drink after his maiden speech. Wells deals with a hereditary peer who sat forever silent in the chamber because he preferred his peers to "think him a fool rather than open his mouth and make them certain of the matter". He paints an accurate picture of Lord Hailsham who, I remember, told me that he relieved the long hours of boredom sitting on the Woolsack by muttering "bollocks to the Bench of Bishops".

R H Tawney, the socialist historian, when offered a peerage by Ramsay MacDonald, asked, "Why? What harm have I ever done the Labour Party?" However, many Labour politicians have been delighted to be admitted to the benches of the Lords. Perhaps it's the glamour of the heraldic devices.

John Wells spent a wonderful day among the heralds. "A lion affronté," Garter King at Arms told him, mysteriously, "doesn't necessarily have to be shown from the front." Things in the College of Arms have been more peaceful since the days when a former Herald tried to boss Prince Philip about at some ceremonial and the Queen's Consort called out, "Piss off, Garter!"

The story reaches the heights of comedy during a debate on UFOs, which Wells describes with delighted irony. "Lord Clancarty recalled that flying saucers had been mentioned in a papyrus during the reign of Thutmose III in Egypt in the 16th century BC. Lord Davies of Leek said he had been informed "that a foreign ambassador eight feet six inches tall with webbed feet had asked whether he could park his flying saucer in the Lords' car park" (he was suspected of irony at the peers' expense).

The House of Lords, the place where such delightful debates are conceivable, was thought of as high up on a magical ladder stretching from the people to the monarch, and such men as Lloyd George offer level playing fields to [illegible]. Nevertheless the Lords were [illegible] and more effective than the Commons in opposing Michael Howard's manic attack on civil liberties in the Tory twilight years. They deserve to continue just for that; and for providing the material for such a gloriously entertaining book.

Poor youth recollected

Steven Poole

Hand To Mouth:
A Chronicle of Early Failure
by Paul Auster
Faber 436pp £15.99

CALL no man a failure until he is dead. Paul Auster, one of the most haunting talents in American letters today, spent his young adulthood staggering from one financial and emotional disaster to another, until he was convinced that his dream of living as a writer was unworkable. Hand To Mouth is partly an intimate disquisition on money; partly, as we travel with Auster around Paris and Dublin, an ironised work of travel literature; and partly a warm sigh of relief, tempered with nostalgia for his penurious youth.

The memoir initially resembles a fluent bar monologue — but, as always with Auster's prose, that polish offers a surface more amenable to ghostly reflections. Writing of his ambition to live as frugally as possible, he says: "Life was cheap in those days" — given the historical context of campus protests against Vietnam, a pungently ambiguous remark. We are treated to fondly comical vignettes of Auster seeking enlightenment through blue-collar vacation work as a waiter, an air-conditioner installation man, and a janitor aboard an Esso oil tanker.

With a gloriously austere horror of the "proper job", Auster then scraped by for years on freelance translation of French poetry and prose (including the North Vietnamese Constitution). The only regular gig he ever had was a part-time job writing catalogues for art books. He jacked that in after seven months — when he saw Duchamp's famous 1947 Surrealist catalogue (decorated with a rubber breast and the legend *"Prière de toucher"*), now swathed in bubble wrap and priced at thousands of dollars. "The joke has been turned into a deadly serious transaction, and once again money has the last word."

Auster: horror of taking a 'proper job'

Aged 30, flat broke and with his first marriage in shreds, Auster tried to turn entrepreneur, inventing a baseball card game that he hawked round toy companies to a humiliating fusillade of rejections. Then he bashed out a pulp detective novel, Squeeze Play, which he sold for a measly $900. Auster's audacious *coup de théâtre*, after the memoir stops at page 125, is to reprint as appendices his early "failures": three quasi-Beckettian plays, the felt-tipped card game, and the novel.

That he disrobes his juvenilia so breezily is the blackest joke in the book. It is confessedly a new failure, that of Auster the garlanded writer and film-maker to keep his own promise. He says of one of the plays, consigned to his desk: "My plan was to keep it there and never look inside the drawer again." Suddenly the cosy line between past failure and present success becomes a knotted scrawl.

So Hand To Mouth in total is a contradictory text about embarrassment, nerve, and the writer's motivations, Auster toying with his own values of literary decorum. And there is much here that prefigures his great work: the best play, Blackouts, has a man pay a private eye to spy on him, and we learn that Auster's first book reviews were signed "Paul Quinn" (both tropes resurface in the New York Trilogy); a protesting student he knew at Columbia blew himself up with a home-made bomb (Leviathan). The detective novel is a fine fiction, even though Auster has coolly given away the story's gimmick in the memoir.

Even the title of this cunning book is doing more work than is obvious. You put your hand to your mouth to signal uncertainty, silence or surprise, or to smoke, as well as to eat — but the hand and the mouth need not even belong to the same person. Auster ends his memoir wondering that, despite his best efforts, he somehow wasn't allowed to sell out. He hasn't started now.

A language that remains a law unto itself

Robert McCrum

AMID the recent hoo-ha in Britain about the Collins Dictionary list of 100 key words for our century, a rather more significant development has been overlooked. The British Council (Patron: The Prince of Wales) has declared, in a pamphlet entitled "The future of English?", that the days of English as a world language may be numbered. "May" is of course the operative word. No one but a fool would assert confidently the world's future linguistic environment.

None the less, the British Council's publication, impressively prepared by David Graddol, (The Future of English?, 64pp, £15.99) deserves careful scrutiny. English seems impregnably established as the world's first global language, spoken by one in five of the world's population. It is the number one language of books, papers, magazines, air-traffic control, business, academic conferences, sport, diplomacy, pop music and advertising. English is also the language of the Internet.

For all that, the position of English is not as secure as it seems. Language, after all, only reflects socio-economic realities. In a world in transition, English is, indeed, about to reach a critical point in its global career. As Graddol puts it: "Within a decade or so, the number of people who speak English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers." What will happen to English when this occurs it is impossible to predict, not least because we are in a situation that is without precedent.

Graddol puts it in market terms: "The global market for the English language may increase in absolute terms, but its market share will probably fall."

Its two chief rivals are Spanish and Chinese, with Arabic and Hindi/Urdu distant runners-up. Spanish, of course, shares with English the historical advantages of a prolonged association with seagoing imperialism, especially in South America. The growth of Spanish-speaking communities throughout the Americas is one of the significant and intriguing linguistic developments of our time and one, oddly enough, anticipated by Thomas Jefferson. In the Asian sphere, the growth of economic activity, telecommunications traffic and air travel between the Asian capitals of the Far East will have linguistic consequences that may well promote the use of Mandarin as a regional lingua franca.

There's no question that on any evaluative scale you care to imagine but that English is still No 1; yet it is followed, country by country, by such a patchwork of competing linguistic traditions that it is inconceivable that English should replace them. But by asking the question "What is the future of English?" the British Council has done us all a service, for the future may not be as straightforward as one might imagine. Where I part company from the British Council is in the assertion that "the future of British English in the world will depend in part on continued, careful management of its 'brand image'."

This comes perilously close to the old 17th and 18th century demands, notably by Jonathan Swift, for an academy to "defend" our language. It did not work then, and it will not work now. One of the joys of English is that its spirit is anarchic, unfettered, free. Emerging from nearly 1,000 years of fierce linguistic conflict among French, Latin and Anglo-Saxon, it obeys no laws and answers to no "brand management", even from well-meaning persons such as the Prince of Wales.

A skill for scandal

Peter Conrad

A Traitor's Kiss:
The Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan
by Fintan O'Toole
Granta 512pp £20

JOYCE recommended three survival stratagems to the beleaguered Irish artist: silence, exile and cunning. Richard Brinsley Sheridan adroitly varied the terms of the recommendation. He exiled himself even earlier than Joyce, following his impoverished father to London at the age of eight in 1759 and never returning before his death in 1816; yet he remained — as Fintan O'Toole puts it in his superb biography — "obsessed with Ireland", and spent most of his life scheming to liberate it from England.

Those schemes required a cunning beyond anything Joyce could conceive. As a confidant of the Prince Regent during the years of George III's lunatic indisposition, Sheridan sought "to undermine the royal prerogative from within". As a double agent, he sweet-talked the prince's critics while subtly signalling to the traitors and mutineers who plotted to extend the French Revolution across the English Channel and put an end to kingship.

But he ignored Joyce's initial ruling, and refused to remain silent. He was the most unstoppably eloquent orator of the age, and in 1786 delivered a five-and-a-half-hour tirade in the Commons which ended by unsettling the regime of the rapacious Indian governor-general, Warren Hastings. Deeds followed words: Sheridan fomented a revolution out of volatile, resonant air.

O'Toole's analysis of his character concentrates on Sheridan's slippery linguistic skills. From Swift (his father's godfather) he acquired the treacherous talent of irony, relying on a bland, literal meaning to conceal his illicit implications. In politics, he used irony as "a private language of disloyalty". Despite the risks, he could never be arraigned: his actual words remained impeccably loyal. His finest dramatic creation embodies the instability of meanings and the anarchic absurdity of words, which never match the things they name. Mrs Malaprop in The Rivals muddles up epithets and epitaphs, pineapples and pinnacles, and speaks in Jabberwockian idiolect.

Sheridan's linguistic subterfuges were more than a creative whimsy. As O'Toole explains, they raised issues of public policy. George III's derangement caused him to free-associate linguistically, blabbing with a compulsive and unregal candour. Once at court — outdoing Sheridan's record in the Commons — he chattered nonstop for 19 hours. Such logorrhoea could topple the state, so Sheridan doctored the Prince Regent's ceremonial utterances, warning that every syllable would be scrutinised. Prevarication enabled him to "maintain a public face at odds with his private motives".

The strain of this lifelong pretence temporarily wrecked his mental health in 1805, when he sent a series of scabrously obscene anonymous letters to the Whig socialites whom he both admired and despised. In doing so, he imitated the most insidious of his characters, the scurrilous gossip Snake in The School For Scandal.

O'Toole interprets Sheridan's plays less as comedies of manners than as psycho-dramas which catered to his obsessive self-invention and permitted his mixed motives to fight schizophrenic duels. The cast of The Rivals is a concert of his antagonistic selves: the plaintive social outsider (Bob Acres), the brash adventurer (Sir Lucius O'Trigger), the alternately intrepid and fretful lover (Jack Absolute and his alter ego Faulkland). The brothers in The School For Scandal — rakish Charles and deceptively prim Joseph — were also twinned in Sheridan himself. His melodrama Pizarro is an audacious apology for his own treasonous negotiations with England's enemies: Alonzo, who betrays imperial Spain to side with the Peruvian natives, unrepentantly declares: "I have no country."

Seen in this way, the plays turn into covert political fables. The collapse of the screen in The School For Scandal (which compromises the skulking Lady Teazle) is for O'Toole more than a farcical embarrassment: it warns of an overturned social order. I had always thought of The Critic, with its accident-prone rehearsal and its maladroit scenic effects, as a Pirandelloesque joke about theatrical illusion: O'Toole shows it to be a Brechtian parable, seditiously mocking patriotism.

SHERIDAN, who transformed the Commons into a theatre, swooning like Garrick's Lear after his marathon monologue in 1786 while he relished his ovation, saw the playhouse as a site for political action. His audiences were not respectful congregations. They were as prone to riot as football hooligans, and regularly trashed Drury Lane, which Sheridan's company occupied. A play could instigate rebellion. One of Sheridan's double-dealing allies, who poisoned himself to escape punishment for treason, quoted a defiant conspiratorial aside from Venice Preserved as he died.

What O'Toole calls Sheridan's "personal revolution" was brilliantly, brazenly successful. His Oedipal quarrel with his father made him sympathise with the American colonists' own independence, and his campaign for Irish autonomy served as a personal manifesto. He enjoyed the supercilious revenge of the ironist or the spy, since no one else knew his secrets; but he never managed to translate his psychological triumph into political victory. Despite his machinations, the Irish uprising in 1798 faltered, and the longed-for French invasion was a fiasco.

Byron, who idolised Sheridan, likened his eyes and forehead to those of a god but said that, lower down, his face — scarred by a skin inflammation — belonged to a satyr. O'Toole discovers a similar duality: behind the comic mask are the fraught features of a tragedian, tormented by internal divisions and incompatible loyalties.

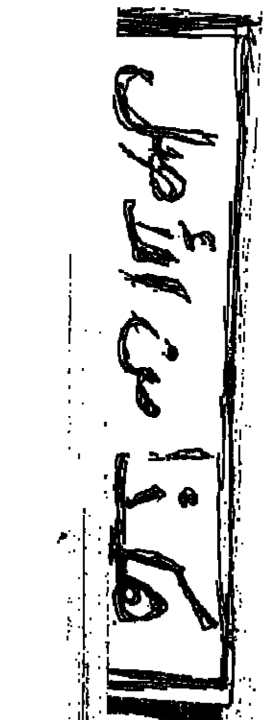
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On a wing and a scare

Mark Cocker



ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOSDAY

IT FIRST appeared at dusk — a pale blur ghosting over the meadows near Horsey, the most easterly, most untamed and beautiful of all the Norfolk Broads. As it came closer, I could see all the distinctive features of a barn owl: the white, heart-shaped facial disk, the staring black eyes, the buff-tinged wings held in a taut downward bow and whose minimal beat cut effortlessly through the damp air as it quartered back and forth across the fields.

Although British barn owls have suffered a steady decline this century, the local situation is in contrast to the species' wider success. It is one of the most cosmopolitan of all birds, ranging across six continents from the Pacific coast of Canada to Tierra del Fuego, and from western Ireland to Papua New Guinea. And with it has travelled a complex skein of folkloric beliefs. In fact, owls in general have probably given rise to a greater body of myth and superstition than any other family of birds.

Most of the associations relate to death and the creature's capacity to foretell human disaster, and for this reason they have been deeply feared around the world. Typically, in China they were believed to snatch away a person's soul or to suck the blood of children, sometimes after assuming human form. Fear of the owl's presence or even simply of the sound of its call is still commonly found both among contemporary Africans and the indigenous peoples of North America. In Europe, until fairly recently, it was a widespread practice to nail owls to the barn door in order to ward off the evil eye.

The notions motivating these actions were not just the follies of ignorant country folk. The Victorian intellectual John Ruskin once wrote: "I have found the owl's cry always prophetic of mischief to me."

Sometimes owl beliefs bridge such huge geographical and cultural divides it seems more than a matter of coincidence. A typical example is the perception shared between tribespeople of West Africa and the Chiricahua Apache of Arizona and New Mexico, that the evil spell cast by an owl's visitation can be dispelled by chasing the bird off with a burning fire brand.

These fundamental similarities, right down to minute details, have led the Finnish ornithologist, Heimo Mikkola, a leading authority on the birds, to propose a common origin for all these ideas. Mikkola suggests that the magical beliefs first travelled from Africa with the earliest migrations of humankind, then radiated outwards with the global spread of palaeolithic cultures.

Despite the possibility of a common origin there are also striking contradictions between some owl associations. It is easy to see why, given the owl's presumed gift of foresight, they have become symbols of wisdom and intelligence, especially in Europe. But more difficult to grasp is why they have also become synonymous with stupidity. In Finland, the word *pöllö* means both an ignorant person and an owl. The ancient Romans also believed that some owls were so foolish they could be induced to twist their heads round and round until they throttled themselves.

Meanwhile my real, living Horsey barn owl had pitched down on some prospective prey and been swallowed briefly by the long vegetation. For a few seconds it was invisible, then suddenly I could see it again, the great moth's wings gathering in the evening silence in wide, rhythmic wingbeats. And up it rose, free of the tangled grass, free once more of the earth, and free also from the confusing knot of human superstition.

Chess Leonard Barden

ENGLAND'S medal dream at the world team championship in Lucerne was rudely awakened when a 2-2 draw with the Ukraine conceded gold and silver to Russia and the US, and again when a final-round loss to Armenia cost bronze: Russia (playing without Kasparov, Karpov and Kramnik) 23½, US 23, Armenia 21, England 20½, Ukraine 18, and five others.

Sadler scored 6/9, and Adams and Speelman played to their ratings, but Short drew all eight games on top board, including 11- and 16-movers as white, while the reserves Hodgson and Nunn totalled ½/3 and 1/2. Nearly 150 countries compete in world chess, so a European gold and two fourths (at the 1996 Olympiad and Lucerne) doesn't look bad, but England was seeded to do better.

The next team event is the 1998 Olympiad, so there is time to react to the Lucerne setback. For a start, it is abnormal in sport for most of the selectors to be candidates for team or captaincy. England could use the wise counsels of Anderton, its best captain, and of Chandler, a former captain and silver medallist whose BCM editorials on team policy make sound sense.

The present laid-back captaincy can also be questioned. Sadler goes to his room each evening and prepares for his next opponent; others are less thorough. Ward, a strong GM and a success as women's captain, would offer a different approach.

There should be more competition for places, too. Short has drawn a colossal 74 per cent of his games in the last three events and lost rating points, but was still played above the higher-rated Adams, whose British Championship play-off with Sadler was aborted.

With Nos 1-4 assured, boards five and six could be made a real contest decided by July 1998 Fide ratings and so giving a chance to Miles and Hebden, who were omitted despite good recent form. And finally, some of the valuable backing the team receives from Duncan Lawrie, the private bankers, could be paid as incentive bonuses for team and individual results rather than as flat fees. Drastic changes? Not when the gap between gold and also-ran is so bridgeable.

Vera-Sadler

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 Nf6 4 Bxc4 e6 5 Nf3 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3 cxd4 8 exd4 Nc6 9 Nc3 Be7 10 Bf4 0-0 11 Rc1 Na5 12 Bc2 b5 13 Ne4 Nd5 14 Bg5 Bxg5 15 Nexg5 Nf6 16 Qd3 g6 17 Ne5 Bb7 18 Rcd1 Bd5 19 Qh3 Kg7 20 Rd3 Rc8 21 Bb1 Bc4 22 Rg3 Qxd4 23 Nexf7 Rxf7 24 Nxh7 Nxh7 25 Bxg6 Nf6 26 Bd3+ Kf8 27 Qh8+ Ke7 28 Qxc8 Bxd3 29 Re1 Nd7 30 Rge3 Bc4 31 b3 Bd5 32 Qxa6 Nc6 33 Qxb5 Nce5 34 h3 Rg7 35 Resigns.

No 2500

Sulava v Godena, 1994. White to play and win. This endgame defeated not only both players but later, numerous GMs. It doesn't take many moves, but do allow yourself plenty of time. The diagram comes from New In Chess, the GM magazine many top players claim to be the best in the world. TCS, 3 Borough Way, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 3HA (+44) (0)1707 659080 offer a free sample copy (normal cost £ to the first 30 Guardian Weekly readers who apply directly to TCS.

No 2499 1 Bb6. If Ke2 2 Nd4 or R any 2 Qf1, or f4 2 Bxg4, or if B any 2 Qxd3. Not 1 Ba7 Rb3

Quick crossword no. 394

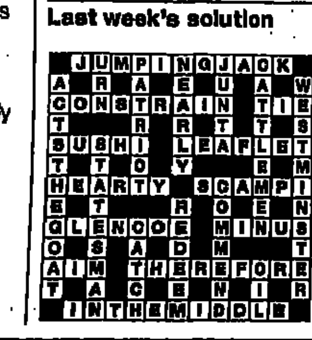
Across

1 Implement (4)
3 Malicious (8)
9 Medium — gave ear (anag) (7)
10 Permit (5)
11 Pane (5)
12 Anticipate (6)
14 The Messiah (6,2,5)
17 Get free (6)
19 Lawful (5)
22 Javelin (5)
23 Profitable (7)
24 Counteracting remedy (8)
25 Rip (4)

Down

1 Arm of cruciform church (8)
2 Overweight (5)
4 Former Spanish coins (6,2,5)
5 Hobo — walk heavily (5)
6 Narrow vessel of the Mediterranean (7)
7 Fine linen — it should be green! (4)
8 Gum from trees (6)
13 Having small cavities (8)
15 Examine closely (7)
16 Pale (6)
18 Pungent (5)
20 Social blunder — tactless remark (5)
21 Continent (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

FRANCE are the champions of the world. On November 1, Paul Chemla, Michel Perron, Alain Levy, Christian Mari, Hervé Mouiel and Franck Multon added the Bermuda Bowl to the Olympic title that they currently hold. Their magnificent achievement is the more praiseworthy because they play an almost entirely natural system based on sound principles and good judgment.

In the final of this year's Bermuda Bowl, the French confronted an old adversary. The US team of Hamman and Wolff, Meckstroth and Rodwell, Nickell and Freeman were the reigning champions and the dominant force in world bridge for more than a decade. The teams had met before in the 1980 Olympiad final, when it was France who prevailed, due in large part to one of the most notorious opening leads of all time. Bob Hamman, holding:

♠AKJ876♥A107632♦None♣2

found himself on lead against seven diamonds doubled. He led the ace of hearts, but that was ruffed and the contract was made, while the ace of spades would have defeated the grand slam. There was a truly uncanny echo of that fateful deal in this year's Bermuda Bowl final.

Once again, Hamman was dealt a powerful major two-suiter with a diamond void and a singleton club. NS game, dealer East:

North
♠3
♥Q1075
♦QJ108643
♣A

West
♠Q8
♥6
♦752
♣K1098642

East
♠109754
♥9
♦AK9
♣Q753

South
♠AKJ62
♥AKJ8432
♦None
♣J

In the Open Room, Christian Mari and Alain Levy for France had reached seven hearts on the North-South cards, despite competition from Meckstroth and Rodwell. It was up to Hamman and Wolff to match this result, otherwise the French lead would become well nigh insuperable. This was the bidding:

South H'man	West Perron	North Wolff	East Chemla
			Pass
1♣[1]	3♣[2]	3♦	5♣
Pass[3]	Pass	5♦	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

(1) Conventional, showing a strong hand. (2) Pre-emptive. (3) A forcing pass, which experts treat as stronger than an immediate bid in such situations.

Hands such as South's are not easy for artificial methods if the opponents can put up a barrage. Poor Bob Hamman had not bid his suits at all by the time the auction came back to him at the five level. He did the best he could by passing and then bidding five hearts, showing his great strength and implying the two-suited nature of his hand.

Bobby Wolff appreciated that he had the right cards for a slam, but — perhaps fatigued by the long tough battle — overlooked a cue-bid of six clubs that would have made it easy for Hamman to bid the grand slam. Over six hearts, Hamman could do no more, and the French gained 13 IMPs.

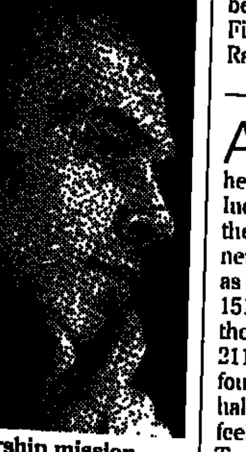
Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Continental drift

ANOTHER London football club have got themselves a Continental coach. Following Chelsea and Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspur have chosen a European manager — Christian Gross of Grasshoppers Zurich. He takes over at Spurs from Gerry Francis, who stepped down after the club's recent poor run of form. Francis, who had three years of his contract still to go, said: "It is with deep regret that I find it necessary to leave."

Gross played for six Swiss sides and German club Bochum before taking over the reins of the Zurich club and leading them to two successive league titles. For him, hard work appears to be an article of faith. Gross said: "I do not inhibit players from expressing their ability on the field of play. I like them to be as positive as possible, but I demand hard work from artists and labourers alike."

Another change of managership came at Scottish Premier Division Aberdeen, where Alex Miller, the assistant coach of Coventry, succeeded Roy Aitken.



Gross: Premiership mission

IT WAS sweet revenge for First Division Reading who defeated Leeds United of the Premiership 3-2 in the fourth round of the Coca-Cola Cup. A header by the 36-year-old Trevor Morley six minutes from time gave a deserved victory to Reading, who were beaten 2-1 at Elland Road in the quarter-finals of the competition last year.

Leeds manager George Graham was gracious in defeat. "Football in England is so popular because it throws up shocks year after year," he explained. "We lost the plot of the game in the second half. We became sloppy in defence and failed to take control in midfield. They deserved to win."

There is certain to be a First Division club in the semi-finals as Reading will in the next round meet Middlesbrough, who beat Bolton 2-1. Elsewhere, Arsenal defeated Coventry City 1-0 after extra time and travel to nearby West Ham, conquerors of Walsall 4-1. Chelsea, who saw off Southampton 2-1, take on First Division strugglers Ipswich, who beat Oxford United 2-1. Liverpool brushed aside Grimsby 3-0 and face a tough tie at St James's Park against Newcastle United, who edged out Derby 1-0.

FRANK SINCLAIR and Dean Sturridge of Derby have joined a growing queue of soccer stars hoping to be called up by Jamaica now that the country has qualified for the World Cup finals for the first time. Four English-born players with Jamaican parents — Robbie Earle of Wimbledon, Deon Burton of Derby and the Portsmouth pair Fitzroy Simpson and Paul Hall — are already on board. Besides these players, Jamaica's Brazilian coach Rene Simoes has the option of calling on other English stars to strengthen his squad.

Australia meanwhile are 90 minutes of football away from taking the 32nd and final place in next year's World Cup finals after a 1-1 draw against Iran in Tehran. They know that after an away goal advantage — Harry Kewell, who plays for Leeds United, got the vital goal in the 19th minute — a 0-0 draw in the second leg of their play-off will be enough to send them on their way to France.

PAUL GASCOIGNE was banned for five matches by the Scottish Football Association after accumulating 21 disciplinary points. The England and Rangers midfielder had chalked up nine points before being sent off in last week's Old Firm clash with Celtic and will miss Rangers' December programme.

A HAUL of five wickets in each innings by Mushtaq Ahmed helped Pakistan thrash the West Indies by an innings and 19 runs in the first Test at Peshawar. The spinner grabbed 5-35 in the first innings as the visitors were bowled out for 151, and then went on to take 5-71 in the West Indies' second innings of 211. The home side made 381, with four of their players contributing half-centuries. "It's always a great feeling when you help your side win Tests," said Mushtaq.

GOODYEAR, the tyre manufacturer, is to withdraw from grand prix racing at the end of next season. The decision, announced last week, will rock Formula One to its core, ending lucrative tyre supply contracts worth nearly $15 million a year for leading teams, such as Ferrari, Williams, McLaren and Benetton. The move may have far-reaching implications for Bridgestone, the Japanese tyre makers, who entered F1 last season. They will become the sole supplier for the entire grid unless a replacement for Goodyear is found.

BRITAIN'S Wimbledon championships made a record profit of $52 million this year — an increase of 6 per cent on last year. Attendances at 436,531 also hit an all-time high. All the surplus goes to the Lawn Tennis Association, which next year plans to make available $2.7 million for coaching the best juniors, $8.5 million to provide "sustainable playing opportunities" for new players and around $500,000 for county players.

SIMON HUGHES, the former Middlesex and Durham seam bowler, has won the ninth William Hill Sports Book of the Year award with a diary of his career, A Lot Of Hard Yakka. He collected a cheque for $8,000 and a special bound copy of the book at a London ceremony.

Football Premiership: Leeds United 3 West Ham United 1

Leeds beat language barrier

David Lacey

FOR A long time at Elland Road last Sunday Lent seemed to have come early. As a footballing feast the game offered only hard rations. But eventually George Graham's Leeds resumed their upward surge in the Premiership by scoring three times in the last 15 minutes. Frank Lampard put West Ham ahead just past the hour and until their opening goal Leeds did not achieve one shot on target.

Nevertheless the victory takes Leeds to the fourth place they held briefly earlier this month, and they were the first side to beat Manchester United this season. Leeds, moreover, have now won seven times in 10 league fixtures, surely championship form in any language.

Well, maybe not the halting phrases and mispronunciations of this match. For the most part West Ham, who since winning at Barnsley at the start of the season had gained only one point on their travels, promised themselves some reward.

Although a calf injury had denied Harry Redknapp's team the sweeping services of Rio Ferdinand, they remained tightly organised at the back and more convincing in attack when they broke away. Leeds, on the other hand, looked unimaginative and unambitious.

West Ham's fourth Premiership defeat in five matches leaves Redknapp's players just above the relegation area. Well though they played at times, this was yet another game where goals, and eventually points, simply slipped away.

Hammer blow . . . Lampard fires West Ham ahead PHOTO: SHAUN BOTTERIL

During an unmemorable first half West Ham had the better of the few chances created. All Leeds seemed to be capable of at this point were trundling, predictable attacks which tended to peter out long before they offered any sort of threat to West Ham's three centre-backs. All too often Leeds's passing was square and inconsequential, with the ball either overhit into touch or underhit.

Thankfully the football woke up after half-time after confident appeals for a penalty following a rash lunge by David Unsworth had appeared to bring down Rod Wallace as the Leeds striker turned on a ball from Gunnar Halle near the right-hand byline. Gerald Ashby, however, did not buy Wallace's dramatic fall and the TV replay suggested no contact had been made.

At least Leeds's sense of injustice roused them to more positive things but West Ham rode out the mini-crisis before going ahead in the 64th minute with a classical counter-attack. Hartson beat David Wetherall to another high ball from Tim Breacker and nodded it down into a space quickly occupied by Frank Lampard, who scored his fourth goal in two matches with a firm drive into the far corner.

No impartial judge would have begrudged West Ham a win at that stage but in the 75th minute Leeds were level, Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink curling a low shot inside the right-hand post after Alf-Inge Haaland's tapped free-kick had been stunned by Lee Bowyer.

In the 87th minute Haaland exploited poor marking to head Bruno Ribeiro's corner past Ludek Miklosko, and in stoppage time Hasselbaink scored again with a further header after David Robertson had side-stepped a lunge from a West Ham substitute, Iain Dowie, before crossing from the left.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Aston Villa 2, Everton 1; Blackburn Rovers 1, Chelsea 0; Derby 3, Coventry 1; Leeds United 3, West Ham United 1; Leicester City 0, Bolton Wanderers 0; Liverpool 0, Barnsley 1; Newcastle United 2, Southampton 1; Sheffield Wednesday 2, Arsenal 0; Tottenham 0, Crystal Palace 1; Wimbledon 2, Manchester United 5.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Bury 1, Sunderlnd 1; Crewe 0, Stockport 1; Manchester City 1, Bradford County 0; Norwich 2, Oxford 1; Nottm Forest 5, Charlton 2; Portsmouth P, Wolves P; Port Vale 0, Sheffield United 0, QPR 2, Huddersfield 1; Reading 0, Ipswich 4; Swindon 1, Middlesbrough 2; Tranmere 3, Stoke 1; West Brom 1, Birmingham 0.

Division Two: Blackpool 1, York 0; Bournemouth 3, Carlisle 2; Bristol City 3, Wycombe 1; Grimsby 4, Burnley 1; Luton 0, Walsall 1; Millwall 1, Chesterfield 1; Northampton 0, Watford 1; Oldham 1, Brentford 1; Southend 1, Bristol Rovers 1; Wigan 1, Preston 4; Wrexham 1, Plymouth 1.

Division Three: Brighton 0, Cardiff 1; Colchester 0, Lincoln C 1; Darlington 1, Cambridge U 1; Doncaster 0, Rochdale 3; Exeter 2, Shrewsbury 2; H'pool 2, Barnet 0; L Orient 1, Notts Co 1; Macclesfld 2, Hull 0; Peterboro 1, Mansfield 1; Scarboro 1, Roth'ham 2; Torquay 2, Scunth'pe 4.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Celtic 4, Dundee U 0; Dunfrmline 1, Aberdeen 1; Hearts 5, Kilmarnock 3; Motherwell 1, Rangers 1; St Johnstn 1, Hibernian 0.

First Division: Ayr 6, Airdrie 0; Dundee 0, Morton 1; Falkirk 0, Raith 1; Partick 2, St Mirren 2; Stirling A 2, Hamilton 1.

Second Division: Clydebank 1, Livingston 1; Clyde 4, Inverness CT 3; East Fife 2, Stranraer 2; Forfar 1, Stenhsmr 1; Queen Sth 0, Brechin 0.

Third Division: Albion 0, Cowdnbth 1; Arbroath 2, Alloa 3; E.Stirling 4, Berwick 0; Queens Pk 2, Dumbarton 3; Ross Co 8, Montrose 1.

Cricket Second Test: Australia v New Zealand

Cook hurries to the boil

AUSTRALIA'S Test cricketers, having retracted the threat of strike action, turned their full attention to New Zealand last Sunday and crushed them by an innings and 70 runs in the second Test in Perth to clinch the three-match series.

Denis Rogers, chairman of the Australian Board, said a deal had been reached with players after the captain Mark Taylor gave a no-strike undertaking following talks over pay and conditions.

Simon Cook, making his Test debut, exploited the cracks in a wearing pitch to take five for 20 off 32 balls as New Zealand crashed to 174 all out in their second innings.

Their last seven wickets fell in 145 minutes for the addition of 105 runs, an even more inglorious effort than their 217 on the first day. Cook finished with five for 39 and match figures of seven for 75 as Australia, who made 461 in their innings wrapped up their eighth series in a row. — *Agencies*

Golf World Cup

Ireland pair are on top

Mark Garrod at Kiawah Island

PAUL McGINLEY and Padraig Harrington last Sunday gave Ireland their first victory in the World Cup of Golf for 39 years on the day that Colin Montgomerie achieved his first individual victory on American soil.

A third successive 66 from Montgomerie swept him past the German Alexander Cejka for his second successive win after winning the Hassan Trophy in Morocco.

Scotland finished second in the team event for the fifth time in their history as McGinley and Harrington joined Harry Bradshaw and Christy O'Connor, who triumphed in 1958, in the Irish Hall of Fame.

Harrington shot a closing 67 and McGinley a 68 to leave Ireland five-stroke winners with a 31-under-par total of 545.

The favourites, Davis Love III and Justin Leonard of the United States, were third and the Welsh pair Ian Woosnam and Phillip Price came charging through the field to finish joint fourth with Germany.

Harrington and McGinley, winners of the Oki Pro-am in Madrid last month, shared a first prize of $425,000, while Montgomerie earned $106,500 for the individual title and the same amount for second place in the team event.